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THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
OSCAR WILDE

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
OSCAR WILDE

SALOME
AND OTHER PLAYS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
ARTHUR SYMONS



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Original French Version of "Salome."
La Sainte Courtisane, A Fragment.

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INTRODUCTION

By ARTHUR SYMONS

The Hôtel Voltaire, 19 Quai Voltaire, on the left bank of the Seine, which I have passed, year after year, when I was in Paris, has a famous tradition behind it. Charles Baudelaire lived there from July, 1856, to April, 1861. There he began his translations of Poe; there he revised the proofs of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857); there he wrote *Théophile Gautier* (1859); he was there when *Les Paradis Artificiels* (1860) was published; there he wrote much of his prose; there he received, among other guests, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Richard Wagner, Manet, Gautier, Banville, Léon Cladel, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Poulet-Malassis and Delacroix. After he left, various well known writers inhabited rooms that might have been his; Oscar Wilde, for instance, who wrote *The Sphinx* there; who had his curious conversation with Coquelin, an actor evidently not impressed with Wilde.

Take, for instance, this: "Pour écrire il me faut de satin jaune." If Wilde was ever inimitable, he was inimitable in his imitations.

Wilde, certainly, from what I knew of him as a man and as a writer, was almost utterly devoid of artistic judgment; and it is no wonder that Whistler had to drop his acquaintance; for, as a matter of fact, of which I myself was a witness, it was always impossible to be on terms of intimacy with Whistler unless one knew how to speak with instinct and with certainty on art in general, and particularly on his own. For, to quote Duret: "Il était doué de cette extrême sensibilité d'artiste, qu'on ne peut mieux comparer qu'avec du chat qui rend incapable de tolérer les gens qui ne sentent pas avec vous."

On the contrary, Wilde, when I first met him, probably in 1894, in rooms Edgar Saltus had taken near Langham Place, seemed to me, with all that was superficial in his knowledge of French prose and verse, incapable of fathoming the genius of Verlaine and of Villiers. Himself desiring always to feel, to touch *la nuance*, he neither touched it nor felt it. Not being creative, he never, I think, really understood the ultimate differences between the amazing and bewildering

and unachieved things that he wrote, and what is creative.

Oscar Wilde was a prodigious entertainer. The whole pageant of his pages is decorative, and passes swiftly; blood streams harmlessly across stages where a sphinx sits, with and without a secret, repeating clanging verse and mysterious prose. Verse and prose are spoken by carefully directed marionettes; songs, dialogues and dramas are presented, with changing scenery and bewildering lights. At times the showman comes before the curtain, and, cutting a caper, argues, expostulates and calls the attention of the audience to the perfection of the mechanism by which his effects are produced and his own skill in the handling of the wires.

Wilde's last attempt at romantic drama is, if not successful, filled with a strange fascination, not easy to define. *Salome*, which in Germany is regarded as a great work, is difficult for us to dissociate from Beardsley's illustrations, in which what is icily perverse in the dialogue (it cannot be designated drama) becomes in the ironical designs pictorial, a series of poses. On the stage these poses are less decorative than on the page, though they have an effect of their own, not fine,

but languid and horrible and frozen. To Wilde passion was a thing to talk about with elaborate and coloured words. *Salome* is a doll, as many have imagined her, soulless, set in motion by some pitiless destiny, personified momentarily by her mother: Herod is a nodding mandarin in a Chinese grotesque. So *The Sphinx* offers no subtlety, no heat of an Egyptian desert, no thrill in anything but the words and cadences; the poem, like *Salome*, is a sort of celebration of dark rites.

The Ballad of Reading Gaol is written in that ballad stanza of six lines which Hood used for *The Dream of Eugene Aram*; and the accident of two poems about a murderer having been written in the same metre has suggested comparisons which are only interesting by way of contrast. *Eugene Aram* is a purely romantic poem; *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* aims at being a realistic poem. It may more properly be compared with Henley's *In Hospital*, where a personal experience, and personally observed surroundings, are put into verse as directly, and with as much precise detail, as possible. Taken merely as sensation recorded, this poem is as convincing, holds you as tightly, as Henley's; and it has, in places, touches at least as finely imaginative; this, for instance:

“We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one’s heart by night.”

But, unlike Henley’s, it has not found a new form for the record of these sensations, so new to poetry; it has not entirely escaped “poetic diction” in its language, and it has accepted what has now become the artificial structure of the ballad, without making any particular effort to use the special advantage of that structure. But then this is just because a romantic artist is working on realistic material; and the curious interest of the poem comes from the struggle between form and utterance, between personal and dramatic feeling, between a genuine human emotion and a style formed on other lines, and startled at finding itself used for such new purposes.

We see a great spectacular intellect, to which, at last, pity and terror have come in their own person, and no longer as puppets in a play. In its sight, human life has always been something acted on the stage; a comedy in which it is the wise man’s part to sit aside and laugh, but in which he may also disdainfully take part, as in a carnival, under any mask. The unbiased, scornful intel-

lect, to which humanity has never been a burden, comes now to be unable to sit aside and laugh, and it has worn and looked behind so many masks that there is nothing left desirable in illusion. Having seen, as the artist sees, further than morality, but with so partial an eyesight as to have overlooked it on the way, it has come at length to discover morality, in the only way left possible for itself. And, like most of those who, having "thought themselves weary," have made the adventure of putting thought into action, it has had to discover it sorrowfully, at its own incalculable expense. And now, having so newly become acquainted with what is pitiful, and what seems most unjust, in the arrangement of mortal affairs, it has gone, not unnaturally, to an extreme, and taken, on the one hand, humanitarianism, on the other realism, at more than their just valuation in matters of art. It is that old instinct of the intellect; the necessity to carry things to their furthest point of development, to be more logical than either life or art, two very wayward and illogical things, in which conclusions do not always follow from premises.

This poem, then, is partly a plea on behalf of prison reform and, so far as it is written with that

aim, it is not art. It is also to some extent an endeavour to do in poetry what can only be done in prose; and thus such intensely impressive touches as the quicklime which the prisoners see on the boots of the warders who have been digging the hanged man's grave, the "gardener's gloves" of the hangman, and his "little bag" are, strictly speaking, fine prose, not poetry. But, it must not be forgotten, all these things go to the making of a piece of work, in which, beyond its purely literary quality, there is a real value of a personal kind—the value of almost raw fact, the value of the document. And here too begins to come in, in an odd, twisted way, the literary quality. For the poem is not really a ballad at all, but a sombre, angry interrupted reverie; and it is the sub-current of meditation, it is the asides which count, not the story, as a story, of the drunken soldier who was hanged for killing a woman. The real drama is the drama of that one of "the souls in pain" who tramp round the prison-yard, to whom the hanging of a man meant most——

"For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die."

It is because they are seen through his at once grieved and self pitying consciousness that all these sorry details become significant:

“We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails;
“We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
And cleaned the shining rails:
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.”

And the glimmerings of romance which come into these pages, like the flowers which may not grow out of the dead man's body as he lies under the asphalt of the prison-yard, are significant because they show us the persistence with which temperament will assert itself:

“It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes,
Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!”

Beauty, one sees, claiming its own in a story meant to be so sordid, so veracious, so prosaically close to fact; and having, indeed, so many of the qualities at which it aims.

And there is also something else in the poem :
a central idea, half, but not more than half, a
paradox :

“And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!”

This symbol of the obscure deaths of the heart, the unseen violence upon souls, the martyrdom of hope, trust and all the more helpless among the virtues, is what gives its unity, in a certain philosophic purpose, to a poem not otherwise quite homogeneous. Ideas were never what the writer of the poem was lacking in; but an idea so simple and so human, developed out of circumstances so actual, so close to the earth, is singularly novel. And, whatever we may think of the positive value of this very powerful piece of writing, there can be no doubt as to its relative value in a career which might be at a turning point.

Literature, to be of the finest quality, must come from the heart as well as the head, must be

emotionally human as well as a brilliant thinking about human problems. And, for this writer, such a return, or so startling a first acquaintance with real things, was precisely what was required to bring into relation, both with life and art, an extraordinary talent, so little in relation with matters of common experience, so fantastically alone in a region of intellectual abstractions.

In an enumeration of his gifts ("the gods have given me almost everything"), Wilde said with confidence: "Whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty." His expression of what he conceived by beauty is developed from many models, and has no new ideas in it; one can trace it, almost verbally, to Pater, Flaubert, Gautier, Baudelaire, and other writers from whom he drew sustenance. Throughout a large part of his work he is seen deliberately imitating the effects that these and other writers have achieved before him. All through the *Intentions* there is a far-off echo of Pater; in *Salome* melodrama is mixed with recollections of *Pelleas et Melisande* and of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* owes much, I think, to the work of Huysmans. Of the writers named, all but the last had their own sense of beauty, their own

imaginative world where they were at home, and could speak its language naturally. Wilde's style is constantly changing, as made things do when one alters them, and it is only at intervals that it ceases to be artificial, imitative or pretentious.

From the first, one of Wilde's limitations had been his egoism, his self-absorption, his self-admiration. This is one of the qualities which have marred the delightful genius of the Irish nation, and it can be traced in the three other Irishmen who may be said to have formed, with Wilde, a group apart in the literature of our time: George Bernard Shaw, George Moore, William Butler Yeats. All have remarkable qualities, each a completely different individuality, and the desire of each is, as Wilde admits, to "Make people wonder." In each there is something not human, which is either the cause or the outcome of an ambition too continuously conscious of itself.

Wilde said nothing which had not been said before him, or which was not the mere wilful contrary of what had been said before him. In his devotion to beauty he seemed to have given up the whole world, and yet what was most tragic in the tragedy was that he had never recognised the true face of beauty. He followed beauty, and beauty

fled from him, for his devotion was that of the lover proud of many conquests. He was eager to proclaim the conquest, and too hasty to distinguish between beauty and beauty's handmaid. His praise of beauty is always a boast, never an homage. When he attempted to create beauty in words he described beautiful things.

Intentions is the most amusing book of criticisms that was ever written. "I cannot but be conscious," says Wilde in one of his essays, "that we are born in an age when only the dull are treated seriously, and I live in terror of not being misunderstood." To be precisely accurate, it is one of the characters in a dialogue who makes this remark. It is, no doubt, meant to have a personal application—it certainly has. Wilde is much too brilliant to be ever believed; he is much too witty to be ever taken seriously. A passion for caprice, a whimsical Irish temperament, a love of art for art's sake—it is in qualities such as these that we find the origin of the beautiful farce of æstheticism, the exquisite echoes of the *Poems*, the subtle decadence of *Dorian Gray*, and the paradoxical truths, the perverted commonsense, of the *Intentions*. Wilde, with a most reasonable hatred of the *bourgeois* seriousness of dull people,

has always taken refuge from the commonplace in irony. Intentionally or not—scarcely without intention—he has gained a reputation for frivolity which does injustice to a writer who has at least always been serious in the reality of his devotion to art. The better part of one of his books is simply a plea for the dignity, an argument for the supremacy, of imaginative art.

The little essay, "The Decay of Lying," is a protest against realism—against "the monstrous worship of facts." It presents certain æsthetic doctrines, which Wilde probably partly believed. We are told, for example, that "Art never expresses anything but itself. It has an independent life, just as Thought has, and develops purely on its own lines . . . All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals. Life and Nature may sometimes be used as part of art's rough material, but before they are of any real service to art, they must be translated into artistic conventions . . . Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life. . . . It follows, as a corollary from this, that external Nature also imitates Art. The only effects that she can show us are effects that we have already seen through poetry, or in paintings

. . . The final revelation is that Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art." All this, startling as it sounds, needs only to be properly apprehended, to be properly analysed, and we get an old doctrine, indeed, but a doctrine in which there is a great deal of sanity and a perfectly reasonable view of things. The two long dialogues called "The Critic as Artist" present a theory of criticism which might certainly be justified by the practice of some of the most perfect among critical writers. "To the critic," we are told, "the work of art is simply a suggestion for a new work of his own, that need not necessarily bear any obvious resemblance to the thing it criticises. The one characteristic of a beautiful form is that one can put into it whatever one wishes, and see in it whatever one chooses to see; and the beauty that gives to creation its universal and æsthetic element makes the critic a creator in his turn, and whispers of a thousand different things, which were not present in the mind of him who carved the statue or painted the panel or graved the gem." The essay on "The Truth of Masks" is a learned argument from Shakespeare in favour of the beautiful and appropriate use of archæology in the mounting of the

Shakespearian drama—an argument which seems to me obviously just, in spite of the warning with which it concludes: “Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in æsthetic criticism attitude is everything.” Then finally, there is a paper on Wainwright, the artist, in “Pen, Pencil, and Poison,” a paper which suffers from the lack of intrinsic interest in its subject. A pretentious, affected writer does not become interesting merely because he commits a murder.

Oscar Wilde is always suggestive: he is interesting, even when he is provoking. At his best, to my thinking, when he is most himself—an artist in epigram—he can be admirable even when his eloquence reminds one of the eloquent writing of others. He is conscious of the charm of graceful echoes, and is always original in his quotations. His criticism is often just, as well as amusing: over and over again he proves to us the truth of masks. By constantly saying the opposite of sensible opinions he proves to us that opposites can often be equally true. While he insists on producing his paradox, sometimes for no other rea-

son than that it is a paradox, and would rather say something that is clever than something that is merely true, it is surprising how often he contrives to illustrate a mathematical figure by an intellectual somersault, and how often he succeeds in combining truth and cleverness. Wilde was an extremely typical figure, alike in the art of life and the art of literature, and, if he might be supposed for a moment to represent anything but himself, he would be the perfect representative of all that is evidently meant by us in our modern use of the word "Decadence."

SALOMÉ
DRAME EN UN ACTE

A MON AMI
PIERRE LOUÏS

PERSONNES.

HÉRODE ANTIPAS, Tétrarque de Judée
IOKANAAN, le prophète
LE JEUNE SYRIEN, capitaine de la garde
TIGELLIN, un jeune Romain
UN CAPPADOCIEN
UN NUBIEN
PREMIER SOLDAT
SECOND SOLDAT
LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS
DES JUIFS, DES NAZARÉENS, etc.
UN ESCLAVE
NAAMAN, le bourreau

HÉRODIAS, femme du Tétrarque
SALOMÉ, fille d'Hérodias
LES ESCLAVES DE SALOMÉ

SCÈNE.

[Une grande terrasse dans le palais d'Hérode donnant sur la salle de festin. Des soldats sont accoudés sur le balcon. À droite il y a un énorme escalier. À gauche, au fond, une ancienne citerne entourée d'un mur de bronze vert. Clair de lune.]

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Comme la princesse Salomé est belle ce soir !

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Regardez la lune. La lune a l'air très étrange. On dirait une femme qui sort d'un tombeau. Elle ressemble à une femme morte. On dirait qu'elle cherche des morts.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Elle a l'air très étrange. Elle ressemble à une petite princesse qui porte un voile jaune, et a des pieds d'argent. Elle ressemble à une princesse qui a des pieds comme des petites colombes blanches . . . On dirait qu'elle danse.

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LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Elle est comme une femme morte. Elle va très lentement. [*Bruit dans la salle de festin.*]

PREMIER SOLDAT

Quel vacarme ! Qui sont ces bêtes fauves qui hurlent ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Les Juifs. Ils sont toujours ainsi. C'est sur leur religion qu'ils discutent.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Pourquoi discutent-ils sur leur religion ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Je ne sais pas. Ils le font toujours . . . Ainsi les Pharisiens affirment qu'il y a des anges, et les Sadducéens disent que les anges n'existent pas.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Je trouve que c'est ridicule de discuter sur de telles choses.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Comme la princesse Salomé est belle ce soir !

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Vous la regardez toujours. Vous la regardez trop. Il ne faut pas regarder les gens de cette façon . . . Il peut arriver un malheur.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Elle est très belle ce soir.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Le tétrarque a l'air sombre.

SECOND SOLDAT

Oui, il a l'air sombre.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Il regarde quelque chose.

SECOND SOLDAT

Il regarde quelqu'un.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Qui regarde-t-il ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Je ne sais pas.

4 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Comme la princesse est pâle ! Jamais je ne l'ai vue si pâle. Elle ressemble au reflet d'une rose blanche dans un miroir d'argent.

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Il ne faut pas la regarder. Vous la regardez trop !

PREMIER SOLDAT

Hérodias a versé à boire au tétrarque.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

C'est la reine Hérodias, celle-là qui porte la mitre noire semée de perles et qui a les cheveux poudrées de bleu ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

Oui, c'est Hérodias. C'est la femme du tétrarque.

SECOND SOLDAT

Le tétrarque aime beaucoup le vin. Il possède des vins de trois espèces. Un qui vient de l'île de Samothrace, qui est pourpre comme le manteau de César.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Je n'ai jamais vu César.

SECOND SOLDAT

Un autre qui vient de la ville de Chypre, qui est jaune comme de l'or.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

J'aime beaucoup l'or.

SECOND SOLDAT

Et le troisième qui est un vin sicilien. Ce vin-là est rouge comme le sang.

LE NUBIEN

Les dieux de mon pays aiment beaucoup le sang. Deux fois par an nous leur sacrifions des jeunes hommes et des vierges : cinquante jeunes hommes et cent vierges. Mais il semble que nous ne leur donnons jamais assez, car il sont très durs envers nous.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Dans mon pays il n'y a pas de dieux à présent, les Romains les ont chassés. Il y en a qui disent qu'ils se sont réfugiés dans les montagnes, mais je

6 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

ne le crois pas. Moi, j'ai passé trois nuits sur les montagnes les cherchant partout. Je ne les ai pas trouvés. Enfin, je les ai appelés par leurs noms et ils n'ont pas paru. Je pense qu'ils sont morts.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Les Juifs adorent un Dieu qu'on ne peut pas voir.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Je ne peux pas comprendre cela.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Enfin, ils ne croient qu'aux choses qu'on ne peut pas voir.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Cela me semble absolument ridicule.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Après moi viendra un autre encore plus puissant que moi. Je ne suis pas digne même de délier la courroie de ses sandales. Quand il viendra la terre déserte se réjouira. Elle fleurira comme le lis. Les yeux des aveugles verront le jour, et les

oreilles des sourds seront ouvertes . . . Le nouveau-né mettra sa main sur le nid des dragons, et mènera les lions par leurs crinières.

SECOND SOLDAT

Faites-le taire. Il dit toujours des choses absurdes.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Mais non ; c'est un saint homme. Il est très doux aussi. Chaque jour je lui donne à manger. Il me remercie toujours.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Qui est-ce ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

C'est un prophète.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Quel est son nom ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

Iokanaan.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

D'où vient-il ?

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PREMIER SOLDAT

Du désert, où il se nourrissait de sauterelles et de miel sauvage. Il était vêtu de poil de chameau, et autour de ses reins il portait une ceinture de cuir. Son aspect était très farouche. Une grande foule le suivait. Il avait même de disciples.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

De quoi parle-t-il ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

Nous ne savons jamais. Quelquefois il dit des choses épouvantables, mais il est impossible de le comprendre.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Peut-on le voir ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

Non. Le tétrarque ne le permet pas.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

La princesse a caché son visage derrière son éventail ! Ses petites mains blanches s'agitent comme des colombes qui s'envolent vers leurs colombiers. Elles ressemblent à des papillons

blancs. Elles sont tout à fait comme des papillons blancs.

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Mais qu'est-ce que cela vous fait? Pourquoi la regarder? Il ne faut pas la regarder . . . Il peut arriver un malheur.

LE CAPPADOCIEN [*montrant la citerne*]

Quelle étrange prison!

SECOND SOLDAT

C'est une ancienne citerne.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Une ancienne citerne! cela doit être très malsain.

SECOND SOLDAT

Mais non. Par exemple, le frère du tétrarque, son frère aîné, le premier mari de la reine Hérodiad, a été enfermé là-dedans pendant douze années. Il n'en est pas mort. À la fin il a fallu l'étrangler.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

L'étrangler? Qui a osé faire cela?

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SECOND SOLDAT

[*montrant le bourreau, un grand nègre*]
Celui-là, Naaman.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Il n'a pas eu peur ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Mais non. Le tétrarque lui a envoyé la bague.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Quelle bague ?

SECOND SOLDAT

La bague de la mort. Ainsi, il n'a pas eu peur.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Cependant, c'est terrible d'étrangler un roi.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Pourquoi ? Les rois n'ont qu'un cou, comme les autres hommes.

LE CAPPADOCIEN

Il me semble que c'est terrible.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Mais la princesse se lève. Elle quitte la table ! Elle a l'air très ennuyée. Ah ! elle vient par ici. Oui, elle vient vers nous. Comme elle est pâle. Jamais je ne l'ai vue si pâle . . .

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Ne la regardez pas. Je vous prie de ne pas la regarder.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Elle est comme une colombe qui s'est égarée . . . Elle est comme un narcisse agité du vent . . . Elle ressemble à une fleur d'argent.

[*Entre SALOMÉ.*]

SALOMÉ

Je ne resterai pas. Je ne peux pas rester. Pourquoi le tétrarque me regarde-t-il toujours avec ses yeux de taupe sous ses paupières tremblantes ? . . . C'est étrange que le mari de ma mère me regarde comme cela. Je ne sais pas ce que cela veut dire . . . Au fait, si, je le sais.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Vous venez de quitter le festin, princesse ?

12 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

SALOMÉ

Comme l'air est frais ici ! Enfin, ici on respire ! Là-dedans il y a des Juifs de Jérusalem qui se déchirent à cause de leurs ridicules cérémonies, et des barbares qui boivent toujours et jettent leur vin sur les dalles, et des Grecs de Smyrne avec leurs yeux peints et leurs joues fardées, et leurs cheveux frisés en spirales, et des Egyptiens, silencieux, subtils, avec leurs ongles de jade et leurs manteaux bruns, et des Romains avec leur brutalité, leur lourdeur, leurs gros mots. Ah ! que je déteste les Romains ! Ce sont des gens communs, et ils se donnet des airs de grands seigneurs.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Ne voulez-vous pas vous asseoir, princesse ?

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Pourquoi lui parler ? Pourquoi la regarder ?
. . . Oh ! il va arriver un malheur.

SALOMÉ

Que c'est bon de voir la lune ! Elle ressemble à une petite pièce de monnaie. On dirait une toute petite fleur d'argent. Elle est froide et chaste, la lune . . . Je suis sûre qu'elle est

vierge. Elle a la beauté d'une vierge . . .
Oui, elle est vierge. Elle ne s'est jamais souillée.
Elle ne s'est jamais donnée aux hommes, comme
les autres Déesses.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Il est venu, le Seigneur ! Il est venu, le fils de
l'Homme. Les centaures se sont cachés dans les
rivières, et les sirènes ont quitté les rivières et
couchent sous les feuilles dans les forêts.

SALOMÉ

Qui a crié cela ?

SECOND SOLDAT

C'est le prophète, princesse.

SALOMÉ

Ah ! le prophète. Celui dont le tétrarque a
peur ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Nous ne savons rien de cela, princesse. C'est le
prophète Iokanaan.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Voulez-vous que je commande votre litère,
princesse ? Il fait très beau dans le jardin.

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SALOMÉ

Il dit des choses monstrueuses, à propos de ma mère, n'est-ce pas ?

SECOND SOLDAT

Nous ne comprenons jamais ce qu'il dit, princesse.

SALOMÉ

Oui, il dit des choses monstrueuses d'elle.

UN ESCLAVE

Princesse, le tétrarque vous prie de retourner au festin.

SALOMÉ

Je n'y retournerai pas.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Pardon, princesse, mais si vous n'y retourniez pas il pourrait arriver un malheur.

SALOMÉ

Est-ce un vieillard, le prophète ?

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Princesse, il vaudrait mieux retourner. Permettez-moi de vous reconduire.

SALOMÉ

Le prophète . . . est-ce un vieillard ?

PREMIER SOLDAT

Non, princesse, c'est un tout jeune homme.

SECOND SOLDAT

On ne le sait pas. Il y en a qui disent que c'est Élie ?

SALOMÉ

Qui est Élie ?

SECOND SOLDAT .

Un très ancien prophète de ce pays, princesse.

UN ESCLAVE

Quelle réponse dois-je donner au tétrarque de la part de la princesse ?

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Ne te réjouis point, terre de Palestine, parce que la verge de celui qui te frappait a été brisée. Car de la race du serpent il sortira un basilic, et ce qui en naîtra dévorera les oiseaux.

SALOMÉ

Quelle étrange voix ! Je voudrais bien lui parler.

PREMIER SOLDAT

J'ai peur que ce soit impossible, princesse. Le tétrarque ne veut pas qu'on lui parle. Il a même défendu au grand prêtre de lui parler.

SALOMÉ

Je veux lui parler.

PREMIER SOLDAT

C'est impossible, princesse.

SALOMÉ

Je le veux.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

En effet, princesse, il vaudrait mieux retourner au festin.

SALOMÉ

Faites sortir le prophète.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Nous n'osons pas, princesse.

SALOMÉ [*s'approchant de la citerne et y regardant*]

Comme il fait noir là-dedans ! Cela doit être terrible d'être dans un trou si noir ! Cela ressemble à une tombe . . . [*aux soldats*] Vous ne m'avez pas entendue ? Faites-le sortir. Je veux le voir.

SECOND SOLDAT

Je vous prie, princesse, de ne pas nous demander cela.

SALOMÉ

Vous me faites attendre.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Princesse, nos vies vous appartiennent, mais nous ne pouvons pas faire ce que vous nous demandez . . . Enfin, ce n'est pas à nous qu'il faut vous adresser.

SALOMÉ [*regardant le jeune Syrien*]

Ah !

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Oh ! qu'est-ce qu'il va arriver ? Je suis sûr qu'il va arriver un malheur.

SALOMÉ [*s'approchant du jeune Syrien*]

Vous ferez cela pour moi, n'est-ce pas, Narraboth? Vous ferez cela pour moi? J'ai toujours été douce pour vous. N'est-ce pas que vous ferez cela pour moi? Je veux seulement le regarder, cet étrange prophète. On a tant parlé de lui. J'ai si souvent entendu le tétrarque parler de lui. Je pense qu'il a peur de lui, le tétrarque. Je suis sûre qu'il a peur de lui . . . Est-ce que vous aussi, Narraboth, est-ce que vous aussi vous en avez peur?

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Je n'ai pas peur de lui, princesse. Je n'ai peur de personne. Mais le tétrarque a formellement défendu qu'on lève le couvercle de ce puits.

SALOMÉ

Vous ferez cela pour moi, Narraboth, et demain quand je passerai dans ma litière sous la porte des vendeurs d'idoles, je laisserai tomber une petite fleur pour vous, une petite fleur verte.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Princesse, je ne peux pas, je ne peux pas.

SALOMÉ [*souriant*]

Vous ferez cela pour moi, Narraboth. Vous savez bien que vous ferez cela pour moi. Et demain quand je passerai dans ma litière sur le pont des acheteurs d'idoles je vous regarderai, à travers les voiles de mousseline, je vous regarderai, Narraboth, je vous sourirai, peut être. Regardez-moi, Narraboth. Regardez-moi. Ah ! vous savez bien que vous allez faire ce que je vous demande. Vous le savez bien, n'est-ce pas ? . . . Moi, je sais bien.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

[*faisant un signe au troisième soldat*]

Faites sortir le prophète . . . La princesse Salomé veut le voir.

SALOMÉ

Ah !

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Oh ! comme la lune a l'air étrange ! On dirait la main d'une morte qui cherche à se couvrir avec un linceul.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Elle a l'air très étrange. On dirait une petite

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princesse qui a des yeux d'ambre. À travers les nuages de mousseline elle sourit comme une petite princesse.

[*Le prophète sort de la citerne. Salomé le regarde et recule.*]

IOKANAAN

Où est celui dont la coupe d'abominations est déjà pleine? Où est celui qui en robe d'argent mourra un jour devant tout le peuple? Dites-lui de venir afin qu'il puisse entendre la voix de celui qui a crié dans les déserts et dans les palais des rois.

SALOMÉ

De qui parle-t-il?

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

On ne sait jamais, princesse.

IOKANAAN

Où est celle qui ayant vu des hommes peints sur la muraille, des images de Chaldéens tracées avec des couleurs, s'est laissée emporter à la concupiscence de ses yeux, et a envoyé des ambassadeurs en Chaldée.

SALOMÉ

C'est de ma mère qu'il parle.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Mais non, princesse.

SALOMÉ

Si, c'est de ma mère.

IOKANAAN

Où est celle qui s'est abandonnée aux capitaines des Assyriens, qui ont des baudriers sur les reins, et sur la tête des tiaras de différentes couleurs? Où est celle qui s'est abandonnée aux jeunes hommes d'Égypte qui sont vêtus de lin et d'hyacinthe, et portent des boucliers d'or et des casques d'argent, et qui ont de grand corps? Dites-lui de se lever de la couche de son impudicité, de sa couche incestueuse, afin qu'elle puisse entendre les paroles de celui qui prépare la voie du Seigneur; afin qu'elle se repente de ses péchés. Quoiqu'elle ne se repentira jamais, mais restera dans ses abominations, dites-lui de venir, car le Seigneur a son fléau dans la main.

SALOMÉ

Mais il est terrible, il est terrible.

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LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Ne restez pas ici, princesse, je vous en prie.

SALOMÉ

Ce sont les yeux surtout qui sont terribles. On dirait des trous noirs laissés par des flambeaux sur une tapisserie de Tyr. On dirait des cavernes noires où demeurent des dragons, des cavernes noires d'Egypte où les dragons trouvent leur asile. On dirait des lacs noirs troublés par des lunes fantastiques . . . Pensez-vous qu'il parlera encore ?

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Ne restez pas ici, princesse ! Je vous prie de ne pas rester ici.

SALOMÉ

Comme il est maigre aussi ! il ressemble à une mince image d'ivoire. On dirait une image d'argent. Je suis sûre qu'il est chaste, autant que la lune. Il ressemble à un rayon d'argent. Sa chair doit être très froide, comme de l'ivoire . . . Je veux le regarder de près.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Non, non, princesse !

SALOMÉ

Il faut que je le regarde de près.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Princesse ! Princesse !

IOKANAAN

Qui est cette femme qui me regarde ? Je ne veux pas qu'elle me regarde. Pourquoi me regarde-t-elle avec ses yeux d'or sous ses paupières dorées ? Je ne sais pas qui c'est. Je ne veux pas le savoir. Dites-lui de s'en aller. Ce n'est pas à elle que je veux parler.

SALOMÉ

Je suis Salomé, fille d'Hérodias, princesse de Judée.

IOKANAAN

Arrière ! Fille de Babylone ! N'approchez pas de l'élu du Seigneur. Ta mère a rempli la terre du vin de ses iniquités, et le cri de ses péchés est arrivé aux oreilles de Dieu.

SALOMÉ

Parle encore, Iokanaan. Ta voix m'enivre.

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LE JEUNE SYBIEN

Princesse ! Princesse ! Princesse !

SALOMÉ

Mais parle encore. Parle encore, Iokanaan, et dis-moi ce qu'il faut que je fasse.

IOKANAAN

Ne m'approchez pas, fille de Sodome, mais couvrez votre visage avec un voile, et mettez des cendres sur votre tête, et allez dans le désert chercher le fils de l'Homme.

SALOMÉ

Qui est-ce, le fils de l'Homme ? Est-il aussi beau que toi, Iokanaan ?

IOKANAAN

Arrière ! Arrière ! J'entends dans le palais le battement des ailes de l'ange de la mort.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Princesse, je vous supplie de rentrer !

IOKANAAN

Angé du Seigneur Dieu, que fais-tu ici avec

ton glaive? Qui cherches-tu dans cet immonde palais? . . . Le jour de celui qui mourra en robe d'argent n'est pas venu.

SALOMÉ

Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN

Qui parle?

SALOMÉ

Iokanaan! Je suis amoureuse de ton corps. Ton corps est blanc comme le lis d'un pré que le faucheur n'a jamais fauché. Ton corps est blanc comme les neiges qui couchent sur les montagnes, comme les neiges qui couchent sur les montagnes de Judée, et descendent dans les vallées. Les roses du jardin de la reine d'Arabie ne sont pas aussi blanches que ton corps. Ni les roses du jardin de la reine d'Arabie, ni les pieds de l'aurore qui trépignent sur les feuilles, ni le sein de la lune quand elle couche sur le sein de la mer . . . Il n'y a rien au monde d'aussi blanc que ton corps.—Laisse-moi toucher ton corps!

IOKANAAN

Arrière, fille de Babylone! C'est par la femme

que le mal est entré dans le monde. Ne me parlez pas. Je ne veux pas t'écouter. Je n'écoute que les paroles du Seigneur Dieu.

SALOMÉ

Ton corps est hideux. Il est comme le corps d'un lépreux. Il est comme un mur de plâtre où les vipères sont passées, comme un mur de plâtre où les scorpions ont fait leur nid. Il est comme un sépulcre blanchi, et qui est plein de choses dégoûtantes. Il est horrible, il est horrible ton corps! . . . C'est de tes cheveux que je suis amoureuse, Iokanaan. Tes cheveux ressemblent à des grappes de raisins, à des grappes de raisins noirs qui pendent des vignes d'Edom dans le pays des Edomites. Tes cheveux sont comme les cèdres du Liban, comme les grands cèdres du Liban qui donnent de l'ombre aux lions et aux voleurs qui veulent se cacher pendant la journée. Les longues nuits noires, les nuits où la lune ne se montre pas, où les étoiles ont peur, ne sont pas aussi noires. Le silence qui demeure dans les forêts n'est pas aussi noir. Il n'y a rien au monde d'aussi noir que tes cheveux . . . Laisse-moi toucher tes cheveux.

IOKANAAN

Arrière, fille de Sodome ! Ne me touchez pas. Il ne faut pas profaner le temple du Seigneur Dieu.

SALOMÉ

Tes cheveux sont horribles. Ils sont couverts de boue et de poussière. On dirait une couronne d'épines qu'on a placée sur ton front. On dirait un nœud de serpents noirs qui se tortillent autour de ton cou. Je n'aime pas tes cheveux . . . C'est de ta bouche que je suis amoureuse, Iokanaan. Ta bouche est comme une bande d'écarlate sur une tour d'ivoire. Elle est comme une pomme de grenade coupée par un couteau d'ivoire. Les fleurs de grenade qui fleurissent dans les jardins de Tyr et sont plus rouges que les roses, ne sont pas aussi rouges. Les cris rouges des trompettes qui annoncent l'arrivée des rois, et font peur à l'ennemi ne sont pass aussi rouges. Ta bouche est plus rouge que les pieds de ceux qui foulent le vin dans les pressoirs. Elle est plus rouge que les pieds des colombes qui demeurent dans les temples et sont nourries par les prêtres. Elle est plus rouge que les pieds de celui qui revient d'une forêt où il a tué un lion et vu des tigres dorés.

Ta bouche est comme une branche de corail que des pêcheurs ont trouvée dans le crépuscule de la mer et qu'ils réservent pour les rois . . . ! Elle est comme le vermillon que les Moabites trouvent dans les mines de Moab et que les rois leur prennent. Elle est comme l'arc du roi des Perses qui est peint avec du vermillon et qui a des cornes de corail. Il n'y a rien au monde d'aussi rouge que ta bouche . . . laisse moi baiser ta bouche.

IOKANAAN

Jamais ! fille de Babylone ! Fille de Sodome ! jamais.

SALOMÉ

Je baiserais ta bouche, Iokanaan. Je baiserais ta bouche.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Princesse, princesse, toi qui es comme un bouquet de myrrhe, toi qui es la colombe des colombes, ne regarde pas cet homme, ne le regarde pas ! Ne lui dis pas de telles choses. Je ne peux pas les souffrir . . . Princesse, princesse, ne dis pas de ces choses.

SALOMÉ

Je baisera ta bouche, Iokanaan.

LE JEUNE SYRIEN

Ah !

[Il se tue et tombe entre Salomé et Iokanaan.]

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Le jeune Syrien s'est tué ! le jeune capitaine s'est tué ! Il s'est tué, celui qui était mon ami ! Je lui avais donné une petite boîte de parfums, et des boucles d'oreilles faites en argent, et maintenant il s'est tué ! Ah ! n'a-t-il pas prédit qu'un malheur allait arriver ? . . . Je l'ai prédit moi-même et il est arrivé. Je savais bien que la lune cherchait un mort, mais je ne savais pas que c'était lui qu'elle cherchait. Ah ! pourquoi ne l'ai-je pas caché de la lune ? Si je l'avais caché dans une caverne elle ne l'aurait pas vu.

LE PREMIER SOLDAT

Princesse, le jeune capitaine vient de se tuer.

SALOMÉ

Laisse-moi baiser ta bouche, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN

N'avez-vous pas peur, fille d'Hérodiad ? Ne vous ai-je pas dit que j'avais entendu dans le palais le battement des ailes de l'ange de la mort, et l'ange n'est-il pas venu ?

SALOMÉ

Laisse-moi baiser ta bouche.

IOKANAAN

Fille d'adultère, il n'y a qu'un homme qui puisse te sauver. C'est celui dont je t'ai parlé. Allez le chercher. Il est dans un bateau sur la mer de Galilée, et il parle à ses disciples. Agenouillez-vous au bord de la mer, et appelez-le par son nom. Quand il viendra vers vous, et il vient vers tous ceux qui l'appellent, prosternez-vous à ses pieds et demandez-lui la rémission de vos péchés.

SALOMÉ

Laisse-moi baiser ta bouche.

IOKANAAN

Soyez maudite, fille d'une mère incestueuse, soyez maudite,

SALOMÉ

Je baiserais ta bouche, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN

Je ne veux pas te regarder. Je ne te regarderai pas. Tu es maudite, Salomé, tu es maudite. [*Il descend dans la citerne.*]

SALOMÈ

Je baiserais ta bouche, Iokanaan, je baiserais ta bouche.

LE PREMIER SOLDAT

Il faut faire transporter le cadavre ailleurs. Le tétrarque n'aime pas regarder les cadavres, sauf les cadavres de ceux qu'il a tués lui-même.

LE PAGE D'HÉRODIAS

Il était mon frère, et plus proche qu'un frère. Je lui ai donné une petite boîte qui contenait des parfums, et une bague d'agate qu'il portait toujours à la main. Le soir nous nous promenions au bord de la rivière et parmi les amandiers et il me racontait des choses de son pays. Il parlait toujours très bas. Le son de sa voix ressemblait au son de la flûte d'un joueur de flûte.

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Aussi il aimait beaucoup à se regarder dans la rivière. Je lui ai fait des reproches pour cela.

SECOND SOLDAT

Vous avez raison ; il faut cacher le cadavre. Il ne faut pas que le tétrarque le voie.

PREMIER SOLDAT

Le tétrarque ne viendra pas ici. Il ne vient jamais sur la terrasse. Il a trop peur du prophète.

[Entrée d'Hérode, d'Hérodias et de toute la cour.]

HÉRODE

Où est Salomé ? Où est la princesse ? Pourquoi n'est-elle pas retournée au festin comme je le lui avais commandé ? ah ! la voilà !

HÉRODIAS

Il ne faut pas la regarder. Vous la regardez toujours !

HÉRODE

La lune a l'air très étrange ce soir. N'est-ce pas que la lune a l'air très étrange ? On dirait une femme hystérique, une femme hystérique qui

va cherchant des amants partout. Elle est nue aussi. Elle est toute nue. Les nuages cherchent à la vêtir, mais elle ne veut pas. Elle chancelle à travers les nuages comme une femme ivre . . . Je suis sûr qu'elle cherche des amants . . . N'est-ce pas qu'elle chancelle comme une femme ivre? Elle ressemble à une femme hystérique, n'est-ce pas?

HÉRODIAS

Non. La lune ressemble à la lune, c'est tout. Rentrons . . . Vous n'avez rien à faire ici,

HÉRODE

Je resterai! Manassé, mettez des tapis là. Allumez des flambeaux. Apportez les tables d'ivoire, et les tables de jaspe. L'air ici est délicieux. Je boirai encore du vin avec mes hôtes. Aux ambassadeurs de César il faut faire tout honneur.

HÉRODIAS

Ce n'est pas à cause d'eux que vous restez.

HÉRODE

Oui, l'air est délicieux. Viens, Hérodiad, nos

hôtes nous attendent. Ah ! j'ai glissé ! j'ai glissé dans le sang ! C'est d'un mauvais présage. C'est d'un très mauvais présage. Pourquoi y a-t-il du sang ici ? . . . Et ce cadavre ? Que fait ici ce cadavre ? Pensez-vous que je sois comme le roi d'Égypte qui ne donne jamais un festin sans montrer un cadavre à ses hôtes ? Enfin, qui est-ce ? Je ne veux pas le regarder.

PREMIER SOLDAT

C'est notre capitaine, Seigneur. C'est le jeune Syrien que vous avez fait capitaine il y a trois jours seulement.

HÉRODE

Je n'ai donné aucun ordre de le tuer.

SECOND SOLDAT

Il s'est tué lui-même, Seigneur.

HÉRODE

Pourquoi ? Je l'ai fait capitaine !

SECOND SOLDAT

Nous ne savons pas, Seigneur. Mais il s'est tué lui-même,

HÉRODE

Cela me semble étrange. Je pensais qu'il n'y avait que les philosophes romains qui se tuaient. N'est-ce pas, Tigellin, que les philosophes à Rome se tuent ?

TIGELLIN

Il y en a qui se tuent, Seigneur. Ce sont les Stoïciens. Ce sont de gens très grossiers. Enfin, ce sont des gens très ridicules. Moi, je les trouve très ridicules.

HÉRODE

Moi aussi. C'est ridicule de se tuer.

TIGELLIN

On rit beaucoup d'eux à Rome. L'empereur a fait un poème satirique contre eux. On le récite partout.

HÉRODE

Ah ! il a fait un poème satirique contre eux ? César est merveilleux. Il peut tout faire . . . C'est étrange qu'il se soit tué, le jeune Syrien. Je le regrette. Oui, je le regrette beaucoup. Car il était beau. Il était même très beau. Il avait

des yeux très langoureux. Je me rappelle que je l'ai vu regardant Salomé d'une façon langoureuse. En effet, j'ai trouvé qu'il l'avait un peu trop regardée.

HÉRODIAS

Il y en a d'autres qui la regardent trop.

HÉRODE

Son père était roi. Je l'ai chassé de son royaume. Et de sa mère qui était reine vous avez fait une esclave, Hérodiás. Ainsi, il était ici comme un hôte. C'était à cause de cela que je l'avais fait capitaine. Je regrette qu'il soit mort . . . Enfin, pourquoi avez-vous laissé le cadavre ici? Il faut l'emporter ailleurs. Je ne veux pas le voir . . . Emportez-le . . . [*On emporte le cadavre.*] Il fait froid ici. Il y a du vent ici. N'est-ce pas qu'il y a du vent?

HÉRODIAS

Mais non. Il n'y a pas de vent.

HÉRODE

Mais si, il y a du vent Et j'entends dans l'air quelque chose comme un battement d'ailes, comme un battement d'ailes gigantesques. Ne l'entendez-vous pas?

HÉRODIAS

Je n'entends rien.

HÉRODE

Je ne l'entends plus moi-même. Mais je l'ai entendu. C'était le vent sans doute. C'est passé. Mais non, je l'entends encore. Ne l'entendez-vous pas? C'est tout à fait comme un battement d'ailes.

HÉRODIAS

Je vous dis qu'il n'y a rien. Vous êtes malade. Rentrons.

HÉRODE

Je ne suis pas malade. C'est votre fille qui est malade. Elle a l'air très malade, votre fille. Jamais je ne l'ai vue si pâle.

HÉRODIAS

Je vous ai dit de ne pas la regarder.

HÉRODE

Versez du vin. [*On apporte du vin.*] Salomé, venez boire un peu de vin avec moi. J'ai un vin ici qui est exquis. C'est César lui-même qui me

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l'a envoyé. Trempez là-dedans vos petites lèvres rouges et ensuite je viderai la coupe.

SALOMÉ

Je n'ai pas soif, tétrarque.

HÉRODE

Vous entendez comme elle me répond, votre fille.

HÉRODIAS

Je trouve qu'elle a bien raison. Pourquoi la regardez-vous toujours ?

HÉRODE

Apportez des fruits. [*On apporte des fruits.*] Salomé, venez manger du fruit avec moi. J'aime beaucoup voir dans un fruit la morsure de tes petites dents. Mordez un tout petit morceau de ce fruit, et ensuite je mangerai ce qui reste.

SALOMÉ

Je n'ai pas faim, tétrarque.

HÉRODE [*à Hérodiàs*]

Voilà comme vous l'avez élevée, votre fille.

HÉRODIAS

Ma fille et moi, nous descendons d'une race royale. Quant à toi, ton grand-père gardait des chameaux ! Aussi, c'était un voleur !

HÉRODE

Tu mens !

..

HÉRODIAS

Tu sais bien que c'est la vérité.

HÉRODE

Salomé, viens t'asseoir près de moi. Je te donnerai le trône de ta mère.

SALOMÉ

Je ne suis pas fatiguée, tétrarque.

HÉRODIAS

Vous voyez bien ce qu'elle pense de vous.

HÉRODE

Apportez . . . Qu'est-ce que je veux ? Je ne sais pas. Ah ! Ah ! je m'en souviens . . .

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Voici le temps ! Ce que j'ai prédit est arrivé,

dit le Seigneur Dieu. Voici le jour dont j'avais parlé.

HÉRODIAS

Faites-le taire. Je ne veux pas entendre sa voix. Cet homme vomit toujours des injures contre moi.

HÉRODE

Il n'a rien dit contre vous. Aussi, c'est un très grand prophète.

HÉRODIAS

Je ne crois pas aux prophètes. Est-ce qu'un homme peut dire ce qui doit arriver? Personne ne le sait. Aussi, il m'insulte toujours. Mais je pense que vous avez peur de lui . . . Enfin, je sais bien que vous avez peur de lui.

HÉRODE

Je n'ai pas peur de lui. Je n'ai peur de personne.

HÉRODIAS

Si, vous avez peur de lui. Si vous n'aviez pas

peur de lui, pourquoi ne pas le livrer aux Juifs qui depuis six mois vous le demandent ?

UN JUIF

En effet, Seigneur, il serait mieux de nous le livrer.

HÉRODE

Assez sur ce point. Je vous ai déjà donné ma réponse. Je ne veux pas vous le livrer. C'est un homme qui a vu Dieu.

UN JUIF

Cela, c'est impossible. Personne a vu Dieu depuis le prophète Élie. Lui c'est le dernier qui ait vu Dieu. En ce temps-ci, Dieu ne se montre pas. Il se cache. Et par conséquent il y a de grands malheurs dans le pays.

UN AUTRE JUIF

Enfin, on ne sait pas si le prophète Élie a réellement vu Dieu. C'était plutôt l'ombre de Dieu qu'il a vue.

UN TROISIÈME JUIF

Dieu ne se cache jamais. Il se montre toujours

et dans toute chose. Dieu est dans le mal comme dans le bien.

UN QUATRIÈME JUIF

Il ne faut pas dire cela. C'est une idée très dangereuse. C'est une idée qui vient des écoles d'Alexandrie où on enseigne la philosophie grecque. Et les Grecs sont des gentils. Ils ne sont pas même circoncis.

UN CINQUIÈME JUIF

On ne peut pas savoir comment Dieu agit, ses voies sont très mystérieuses. Peut-être ce que nous appelons le mal est le bien, et ce que nous appelons le bien est le mal. On ne peut rien savoir. Le nécessaire c'est de se soumettre à tout. Dieu est très fort. Il brise au même temps les faibles et les forts. Il n'a aucun souci de personne.

LE PREMIER JUIF

C'est vrai cela. Dieu est terrible. Il brise les faibles et les forts comme on brise le blé dans un mortier. Mais cet homme n'a jamais vu Dieu. Personne n'a vu Dieu depuis le prophète Élie.

HÉRODIAS

Faites-les taire. Ils m'ennuient.

HÉRODE

Mais j'ai entendu dire qu'Iokanaan lui-même est votre prophète Élie.

UN JUIF

Cela ne se peut pas. Depuis le temps du prophète Élie il y a plus de trois cents ans.

HÉRODE

Il y en a qui disent que c'est le prophète Élie.

UN NAZARÉEN

Mais, je suis sûr que c'est le prophète Élie.

UN JUIF

Mais non, ce n'est pas le prophète Élie.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Le jour est venu, le jour du Seigneur, et j'entends sur les montagnes les pieds de celui qui sera le Sauveur du monde.

HÉRODE

Qu'est ce que cela veut dire? Le Sauveur du monde?

TIGELLIN

C'est un titre que prend César.

HÉRODE

Mais César ne vient pas en Judée. J'ai reçu hier des lettres de Rome. On ne m'a rien dit de cela. Enfin, vous, Tigellin, qui avez été à Rome pendant l'hiver, vous n'avez rien entendu dire de cela?

TIGELLIN

En effet, Seigneur, je n'en ai pas entendu parler. J'explique seulement le titre. C'est un des titres de César.

HÉRODE

Il ne peut pas venir, César. Il est goutteux. On dit qu'il a des pieds d'éléphant. Aussi il y a des raisons d'État. Celui qui quitte Rome perd Rome. Il ne viendra pas. Mais, enfin, c'est le maître, César. Il viendra s'il veut. Mais je ne pense pas qu'il vienne.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Ce n'est pas de César que le prophète a parlé,
Seigneur.

HÉRODE

Pas de César ?

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Non, Seigneur.

HÉRODE

De qui donc a-t-il parlé ?

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Du Messie qui est venu.

UN JUIF

Le Messie n'est pa venu.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Il est venu, et il fait des miracles partout.

HÉRODIAS

Oh ! Oh ! les miracles. Je ne crois pas aux
miracles. J'en ai vu trop. [*Au page.*] Mon
éventail.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Cet homme fait de véritables miracles. Ainsi, à l'occasion d'un mariage qui a eu lieu dans une petite ville de Galilée, une ville assez importante, il a changé de l'eau en vin. Des personnes qui étaient là me l'ont dit. Aussi il a guéri deux lépreux qui étaient assis devant la porte de Capharnaüm, seulement en les touchant.

LE SECOND NAZARÉEN

Non, c'étaient deux aveugles qu'il a guéris à Capharnaüm.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Non, c'étaient des lépreux. Mais il a guéri des aveugles aussi, et on l'a vu sur une montagne parlant avec des anges.

UN SADDUCÉEN

Les anges n'existent pas.

UN PHARISIEN

Les anges existent, mais je ne crois pas que cet homme leur ait parlé.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Il a été vu par une foule de passants parlant avec des anges.

UN SADDUCÉEN

Pas avec des anges.

HÉRODIAS

Comme ils m'agacent, ces hommes ! Ils sont bêtes. Ils sont tout à fait bêtes. [*Au page.*] Eh ! bien, mon éventail. [*Le page lui donne l'éventail.*] Vous avez l'air de rêver. Il ne faut pas rêver. Les rêveurs sont des malades. [*Elle frappe le page avec son éventail.*]

LE SECOND NAZARÉEN

Aussi il y a le miracle de la fille de Jaïre.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Mais oui, c'est très certain cela. On ne peut pas le nier.

HÉRODIAS

Ces gens-là sont fous. Ils ont trop regardé la lune. Dites-leur de se taire.

HÉRODE

Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela, le miracle de la fille de Jaïre ?

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

La fille de Jaïre était morte. Il l'a ressuscitée.

HÉRODE

Il ressuscite les morts ?

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Oui, Seigneur. Il ressuscite les morts.

HÉRODE

Je ne veux pas qu'il fasse cela. Je lui défends de faire cela. Je ne permets pas qu'on ressuscite les morts. Il faut chercher cet homme et lui dire que je ne lui permets pas de ressusciter les morts. Où est-il à présent cet homme ?

LE SECOND NAZARÉEN

Il est partout, Seigneur, mais il est très difficile de le trouver.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

On dit qu'il est en Samarie à présent.

UN JUIF

On voit bien que ce n'est le Messie, s'il est en Samarie. Ce n'est pas aux Samaritains que le Messie viendra. Les Samaritains sont maudits. Ils n'apportent jamais d'offrandes au temple.

LE SECOND NAZARÉEN

Il a quitté la Samarie il y a quelques jours. Moi, je crois qu'en ce moment-ci il est dans les environs de Jérusalem.

LE PREMIER NAZARÉEN

Mais non, il n'est pas là. Je viens justement d'arriver de Jérusalem. On n'a pas entendu parler de lui depuis deux mois.

HÉRODE

Enfin, cela ne fait rien ! Mais il faut le trouver et lui dire de ma part que je ne lui permets pas de ressusciter les morts. Changer de l'eau en vin, guérir les lépreux et les aveugles . . . il peut faire tout cela s'il le veut. Je n'ai rien à dire contre cela. En effet, je trouve que guérir les lépreux est une bonne action. Mais je ne permets pas qu'il ressuscite les morts . . . Ce serait terrible, si les morts reviennent.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Ah ! l'impudique ! la prostituée ! Ah ! la fille de Babylone avec ses yeux d'or et ses paupières dorées ! Voici ce que dit le Seigneur Dieu. Faites venir contre elle une multitude d'hommes. Que le peuple prenne des pierres et la lapide . . .

HÉRODIAS

Faites-le taire !

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Que les capitaines de guerre la percent de leurs épées, qu'ils l'écrasent sous leurs boucliers.

HÉRODIAS

Mais, c'est infâme.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

C'est ainsi que j'abolirai les crimes de dessus la terre, et que toutes les femmes apprendront à ne pas imiter les abominations de celle-là.

HÉRODIAS

Vous entendez ce qu'il dit contre moi ? Vous le laissez insulter votre épouse ?

HÉRODE

Mais il n'a pas dit votre nom.

HÉRODIAS

Que'est-ce que cela fait? Vous savez bien que c'est moi qu'il cherche à insulter. Et je suis votre épouse, n'est-ce pas?

HÉRODE

Oui, chère et digne Hérodias, vous êtes mon épouse, et vous avez commencé par être l'épouse de mon frère.

HÉRODIAS

C'est vous qui m'avez arrachée de ses bras.

HÉRODE

En effet, j'étais le plus fort . . . mais ne parlons pas de cela. Je ne veux pas parler de cela. C'est à cause de cela que le prophète a dit des mots d'épouvante. Peut-être à cause de cela va-t-il arriver un malheur. N'en parlons pas . . . Noble Hérodias, nous oublions nos convives. Verse-moi à boire, ma bien-aimée. Remplissez de vin les grandes coupes d'argent et les grandes coupes de

verre. Je vais boire à la santé de César. Il y a des Romains ici, il faut boire à la santé de César.

TOUS

César ! César !

HÉRODE

Vous ne remarquez pas comme votre fille est pâle.

HÉRODIAS

Qu'est-ce que cela vous fait qu'elle soit pâle ou non ?

HÉRODE

Jamais je ne l'ai vue si pâle.

HÉRODIAS

Il ne faut pas la regarder.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

En ce jour-là le soleil deviendra noir comme un sac de poil, et la lune deviendra comme du sang, et les étoiles du ciel tomberont sur la terre comme les figues vertes tombent d'un figuier, et les rois de la terre auront peur.

HÉRODIAS

Ah ! Ah ! Je voudrais bien voir ce jour dont il parle, où la lune deviendra comme du sang et où les étoiles tomberont sur la terre comme des figues vertes. Ce prophète parle comme un homme ivre . . . Mais je ne peux pas souffrir le son de sa voix. Je déteste sa voix. Ordonnez qu'il se taise.

HÉRODE

Mais non. Je ne comprends pas ce qu'il a dit, mais cela peut être un présage.

HÉRODIAS

Je ne crois pas aux présages. Il parle comme un homme ivre.

HÉRODE

Peut-être qu'il est ivre du vin de Dieu !

HÉRODIAS

Quel vin est-ce, le vin de Dieu ? De quelles vignes vient-il ? Dans quel pressoir peut-on le trouver ?

HÉRODE [*Il ne quitte plus Salomé du regard.*]

Tigellin, quand tu as été à Rome dernière-

ment, est-ce que l'empereur t'a parlé au sujet . . . ?

TIGELLIN

A quel sujet, Seigneur ?

HÉRODE

A quel sujet ? Ah ! je vous ai adressé une question, n'est-ce pas ? J'ai oublié ce que je voulais savoir.

HÉRODIAS

Vous regardez encore ma fille. Il ne faut pas la regarder. Je vous ai déjà dit cela.

HÉRODE

Vous ne dites que cela.

HÉRODIAS

Je le redis.

HÉRODE

Et la restauration du temple dont on a tant parlé ? Est-ce qu'on va faire quelque chose ? On dit, n'est-ce pas que le voile du sanctuaire a disparu ?

HÉRODIAS

C'est toi qui l'a pris. Tu parles à tort et à travers. Je ne veux pas rester ici. Rentrons.

HÉRODE

Salomé, dansez pour moi.

HÉRODIAS

Je ne veux pas qu'elle danse.

SALOMÉ

Je n'ai aucune envie de danser, tétrarque.

HÉRODE

Salomé, fille d'Hérodias, dansez pour moi.

HÉRODIAS

Laissez la tranquille.

HÉRODE

Je vous ordonne de danser, Salomé.

SALOMÉ

Je ne danserai pas, tétrarque.

HÉRODIAS [*riant*]

Voilà comme elle vous obéit !

HÉRODE

Qu'est-ce que cela me fait qu'elle danse ou non ? Cela ne me fait rien. Je suis heureux ce soir. Je suis très heureux. Jamais je n'ai été si heureux.

LE PREMIER SOLDAT

Il a l'air sombre, le tétrarque. N'est-ce pas qu'il a l'air sombre ?

LE SECOND SOLDAT

Il a l'air sombre.

HÉRODE

Pourquoi ne serais-je pas heureux ? César, qui est le maître du monde, qui est le maître de tout, m'aime beaucoup. Il vient de m'envoyer des cadeaux de grande valeur. Aussi il m'a promis de citer à Rome le roi de Cappadoce qui est mon ennemi. Peut-être à Rome il le crucifera. Il peut faire tout ce qu'il veut, César. Enfin, il est le maître. Ainsi, vous voyez, j'ai le droit d'être heureux. Il n'y a rien au monde qui puisse gâter mon plaisir.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Il sera assis sur son trône. Il sera vêtu de

pourpre et d'écarlate. Dans sa main il portera un vase d'or plein de ses blasphèmes. Et l'ange du Seigneur le frappera. Il sera mangé des vers.

HÉRODIAS

Vous entendez ce qu'il dit de vous. Il dit que vous serez mangé des vers.

HÉRODE

Ce n'est pas de moi qu'il parle. Il ne dit jamais rien contre moi. C'est du roi de Cappadoce qu'il parle, du roi de Cappadoce qui est mon ennemi. C'est celui-là qui sera mangé des vers. Ce n'est pas moi. Jamais il n'a rien dit contre moi, le prophète, sauf que j'ai eu tort de prendre comme épouse l'épouse de mon frère. Peut-être a-t-il raison. En effet, vous êtes stérile.

HÉRODIAS

Je suis stérile, moi. Et vous dite cela, vous qui regardez toujours ma fille, vous qui avez voulu la faire danser pour votre plaisir. C'est ridicule de dire cela. Moi j'ai eu un enfant. Vous n'avez jamais eu d'enfant, même d'une de vos esclaves. C'est vous qui êtes stérile, ce n'est pas moi.

HÉRODE

Taisez-vous. Je vous dis que vous êtes stérile. Vous ne m'avez pas donné d'enfant, et le prophète dit que notre mariage n'est pas un vrai mariage. Il dit que c'est un mariage incestueux, un mariage qui apportera des malheurs . . . J'ai peur qu'il ait raison. Je suis sûr qu'il a raison. Mais ce n'est pas le moment de parler de ces choses. En ce moment-ci je veux être heureux. Au fait je le suis. Je suis très heureux. Il n'y a rien qui me manque.

HÉRODIAS

Je suis bien contente que vous soyez de si belle humeur, ce soir. Ce n'est pas dans vos habitudes. Mais il est tard. Rentrons. Vous n'oubliez pas qu'au lever du soleil nous allons tous à la chasse. Aux ambassadeurs de César il faut faire tout honneur, n'est-ce pas ?

LE SECOND SOLDAT

Comme il a l'air sombre, le tétrarque.

LE PREMIER SOLDAT

Oui, il a l'air sombre.

HÉRODE

Salomé, Salomé, dansez pour moi. Je vous supplie de danser pour moi. Ce soir je suis triste. Oui, je suis très triste ce soir. Quand je suis entré ici, j'ai glissé dans le sang, ce qui est d'un mauvais présage, et j'ai entendu, je suis sûr que j'ai entendu un battement d'ailes dans l'air, un battement d'ailes gigantesques. Je ne sais pas ce que cela veut dire . . . Je suis triste ce soir. Ainsi dansez pour moi. Dansez pour moi, Salomé, je vous supplie. Si vous dansez pour moi vous pourrez me demander tout ce que vous voudrez et je vous le donnerai. Oui, dansez pour moi, Salomé, et je vous donnerai tout ce que vous me demanderez, fût-ce la moitié de mon royaume.

SALOMÉ [*se levant*]

Vous me donnerez tout ce que je demanderai, tétrarque ?

HÉRODIAS

Ne dansez pas, ma fille.

HÉRODE

Tout, fût-ce la moitié de mon royaume.

SALOMÉ

Vous le jurez, tétrarque ?

HÉRODE

Je le jure, Salomé.

HÉRODIAS

Ma fille, ne dansez pas.

SALOMÉ

Sur quoi jurez-vous, tétrarque ?

HÉRODE

Sur ma vie, sur ma couronne, sur mes dieux. Tout ce que vous voudrez je vous le donnerai, fût-ce la moitié de mon royaume, si vous dansez pour moi. Oh ! Salomé, Salomé, dansez pour moi.

SALOMÉ

Vous avez juré, tétrarque.

HÉRODE

J'ai juré, Salomé.

SALOMÉ

Tout ce que je vous demanderai, fût-ce la moitié de votre royaume ?

HÉRODIAS

Ne dansez pas, ma fille.

HÉRODE

Fût-ce la moitié de mon royaume. Comme reine, tu serais très belle, Salomé, s'il te plaisait de demander la moitié de mon royaume. N'est-ce pas qu'elle serait très belle comme reine? . . . Ah! il fait froid ici! il y a un vent très froid, et j'entends . . . pourquoi est-ce que j'entends dans l'air ce battement d'ailes? Oh! on dirait qu'il y a un oiseau, un grand oiseau noir, qui plane sur la terrasse. Pourquoi est-ce que je ne peux pas le voir, cet oiseau? Le battement de ses ailes est terrible. Le vent qui vient de ses ailes est terrible. C'est un vent froid . . . Mais non, il ne fait pas froid du tout. Au contraire, il fait très chaud. Il fait trop chaud. J'étouffe. Versez-moi l'eau sur les mains. Donnez-moi de la neige à manger. Dégrafez mon manteau. Vite, vite, dégrafez mon manteau . . . Non. Laissez-le. C'est ma couronne qui me fait mal, ma couronne de roses. On dirait que ces fleurs sont faites de feu. Elles ont brûlé mon front. [*Il arrache de sa tête la couronne, et la jette sur la table.*] Ah! enfin, je respire. Comme ils sont

rouges ces pétales ! On dirait des taches de sang sur la nappe. Cela ne fait rien. Il ne faut pas trouver des symboles dans chaque chose qu'on voit. Cela rend la vie impossible. Il serait mieux de dire que les taches de sang sont aussi belles que les pétales de roses. Il serait beaucoup mieux de dire cela. . . . Mais ne parlons pas de cela. Maintenant je suis heureux. Je suis très heureux. J'ai le droit d'être heureux, n'est-ce pas ? Votre fille va danser pour moi. N'est-ce pas que vous allez danser pour moi, Salomé ? Vous avez promis de danser pour moi.

HÉRODIAS

Je ne veux pas qu'elle danse.

SALOMÉ

Je danserai pour vous, tétrarque.

HÉRODE

Vous entendez ce que dit votre fille. Elle va danser pour moi. Vous avez bien raison, Salomé, de danser pour moi. Et, après que vous aurez dansé n'oubliez pas de me demander tout ce que vous voudrez. Tout ce que vous voudrez je vous le donnerai, fût-ce la moitié de mon royaume. J'ai juré, n'est-ce pas ?

SALOMÉ

Vous avez juré, tétrarque.

HÉRODE

Et je n'ai jamais manqué à ma parole. Je ne suis pas de ceux qui manquent à leur parole. Je ne sais pas mentir. Je suis l'esclave de ma parole, et ma parole c'est la parole d'un roi. Le roi de Cappadoce ment toujours, mais ce n'est pas un vrai roi. C'est un lâche. Aussi il me doit de l'argent qu'il ne veut pas payer. Il a même insulté mes ambassadeurs. Il a dit des choses très blessantes. Mais César le crucifiera quand il viendra à Rome. Je suis sûr que César le crucifiera. Sinon il mourra mangé des vers. Le prophète l'a prédit. Eh bien ! Salomé, qu'attendez-vous ?

SALOMÉ

J'attende que mes esclaves m'apportent des parfums et les sept voiles et m'ôtent mes sandales.

[Les esclaves apportent des parfums et les sept voiles et ôtent les sandales de Salomé.]

HÉRODE

Ah ! vous allez danser pieds nus ! C'est bien !

C'est bien ! Vos petits pieds seront comme des colombes blanches. Ils ressembleront à des petites fleurs blanches qui dansent sur un arbre . . . Ah ! non. Elle va danser dans le sang ! Il y a du sang par terre. Je ne veux pas qu'elle danse dans le sang. Ce serait d'un très mauvais présage.

HÉRODIAS

Qu'est-ce que cela vous fait qu'elle danse dans le sang ? Vous avez bien marché dedans vous . .

HÉRODE

Qu'est-ce que cela me fait ? Ah ! regardez la lune ! Elle est devenue rouge. Elle est devenue rouge comme du sang. Ah ! le prophète l'a bien prédit que la lune deviendrait rouge comme du sang. N'est-ce pas qu'il a prédit cela ? Vous l'avez tous entendu. La lune est devenue rouge comme du sang. Ne le voyez-vous pas ?

HÉRODIAS

Je le vois bien, et les étoiles tombent comme des figues vertes, n'est-ce pas ? Et le soleil devient noir comme un sac de poil, et les rois de la terre ont peur. Cela au moins on le voit

Pour une fois dans sa vie le prophète a eu raison. Les rois de la terre ont peur. . . . Enfin, rentrons. Vous êtes malade. On va dire à Rome que vous êtes fou. Rentrons, je vous dis.

LA VOIX D'IOKANAAN

Qui est celui qui vient d'Edom, qui vient de Bosra avec sa robe teinte de pourpre ; qui éclate dans la beauté de ses vêtements, et qui marche avec une force toute puissante ? Pourquoi vos vêtements sont-ils teints d'écarlate ?

HÉRODIAS

Rentrons. La voix de cet homme m'exaspère. Je ne veux pas que ma fille danse pendant qu'il crie comme cela. Je ne veux pas qu'elle danse pendant que vous le regardez comme cela. Enfin, je ne veux pas qu'elle danse.

HÉRODE

Ne te lève pas, mon épouse, ma reine, c'est inutile. Je ne rentrerai pas avant qu'elle n'ait dansé. Dansez, Salomé, dansez pour moi.

HÉRODIAS

Ne dansez pas, ma fille.

SALOMÉ

Je suis prête, tétrarque.

[*Salomé danse la danse des sept voiles.*]

HÉRODE

Ah ! c'est magnifique, c'est magnifique ! Vous voyez qu'elle a dansé pour moi, votre fille. Approchez, Salomé ! Approchez, afin que je puisse vous donner votre salaire. Ah ! je paie bien les danseuses, moi. Toi, je te paierai bien. Je te donnerai tout ce que tu voudras. Que veux-tu, dis ?

SALOMÉ [*s'agenouillant*]

Je veux qu'on m'apporte présentement dans un bassin d'argent . . .

HÉRODE [*riant*]

Dans un bassin d'argent ? mais oui, dans un bassin d'argent, certainement. Elle est charmante, n'est-ce pas ? Qu'est-ce que vous voulez qu'on vous apporte dans un bassin d'argent, ma chère et belle Salomé, vous qui êtes la plus belle de toutes les filles de Judée ? Qu'est-ce vous voulez qu'on vous apporte dans un bassin d'argent ? Dites-moi. Quoi-que cela puisse être

on vous le donnera. Mes trésors vous appartiennent. Qu'est-ce que c'est, Salomé.

SALOMÉ [*se levant*]

La tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODIAS

Ah ! c'est bien dit, ma fille.

HÉRODE

Non, non.

HÉRODIAS

C'est bien dit, ma fille.

HÉRODE

Non, non, Salomé. Vous ne me demandez pas cela. N'écoutez pas votre mère. Elle vous donne toujours de mauvais conseils. Il ne faut pas l'écouter.

SALOMÉ

Je n'écoute pas ma mère. C'est pour mon propre plaisir que je demande la tête d'Iokanaan dans un bassin d'argent. Vous avez juré, Hérode. N'oubliez pas que vous avez juré.

HÉRODE

Je le sais. J'ai juré par mes dieux. Je le sais bien. Mais je vous supplie, Salomé, de me demander autre chose. Demandez moi la moitié de mon royaume, et je vous la donnerai. Mais ne me demandez pas ce que vous m'avez demandé.

SALOMÉ

Je vous demande la tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODE

Non, non, je ne veux pas.

SALOMÉ

Vous avez juré, Hérode.

HÉRODIAS

Oui, vous avez juré. Tout le monde vous a entendu. Vous avez juré devant tout le monde.

HÉRODE

Taisez-vous. Ce n'est pas à vous que je parle.

HÉRODIAS

Ma fille a bien raison de demander la tête de cet homme. Il a vomì des insultes contre moi.

Il a dit des choses monstrueuses contre moi. On voit qu'elle aime beaucoup sa mère. Ne cédez pas, ma fille. Il a juré, il a juré.

HÉRODE

Taisez-vous. Ne me parlez pas . . . Voyons, Salomé, il faut être raisonnable, n'est-ce pas? N'est-ce pas qu'il faut être raisonnable? Je n'ai jamais été dur envers vous. Je vous ai toujours aimée . . . Peut-être, je vous ai trop aimée. Ainsi, ne me demandez pas cela. C'est horrible, c'est épouvantable de me demander cela. Au fond, je ne crois pas que vous soyez sérieuse. La tête d'un homme décapitée, c'est une chose laide, n'est-ce pas? Ce n'est pas une chose qu'une vierge doive regarder. Quel plaisir cela pourrait-il vous donner? Aucun. Non, non, vous ne voulez pas cela . . . Écoutez-moi un instant. J'ai une émeraude, une grande émeraude ronde que le favori de César m'a envoyée. Si vous regardiez à travers cette émeraude vous pourriez voir des choses qui se passent à une distance immense. César lui-même en porte une tout à fait pareille quand il va au cirque. Mais la mienne est plus grande. Je sais bien qu'elle est plus grande. C'est la plus grande émeraude du monde. N'est-

ce pas que vous voulez cela? Demandez-moi cela et je vous le donnerai.

SALOMÉ

Je demande la tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODE

Vous ne m'écoutez pas, vous ne m'écoutez pas. Enfin, laissez-moi parler, Salomé.

SALOMÉ

La tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODE

Non, non, vous ne voulez pas cela. Vous me dites cela seulement pour me faire de la peine, parce que je vous ai regardée pendant toute la soirée. Eh! bien, oui. Je vous ai regardée pendant toute la soirée. Votre beauté m'a troublé. Votre beauté m'a terriblement troublé, et je vous ai trop regardée. Mais je ne le ferai plus. Il ne faut regarder ni les choses ni les personnes. Il ne faut regarder que dans les miroirs. Car les miroirs ne nous montrent que des masques . . . Oh! Oh! du vin! j'ai soif . . . Salomé, Salomé, soyons amis. Enfin, voyez . . . Qu'est-ce

que je voulais dire? Qu'est-ce que c'était? Ah! je m'en souviens! . . . Salomé! Non, venez plus près de moi. J'ai peur que vous ne m'entendiez pas . . . Salomé, vous connaissez mes paons blancs, mes beaux paons blancs, qui se promènent dans le jardin entre les myrtes et les grands cyprès. Leurs becs sont dorés, et les grains qu'ils mangent sont dorés aussi, et leurs pieds sont teints de pourpre. La pluie vient quand ils crient, et quand ils se pavanent la lune se montre au ciel. Ils vont deux à deux entre les cyprès et les myrtes noirs et chacun a son esclave pour le soigner. Quelquefois ils volent à travers les arbres, et quelquefois ils couchent sur le gazon et autour de l'étang. Il n'y a pas dans le monde d'oiseaux si merveilleux. Il n'y a aucun roi du monde qui possède des oiseaux aussi merveilleux. Je suis sûr que même César ne possède pas d'oiseaux aussi beaux. Eh bien! je vous donnerai cinquante de mes paons. Ils vous suivront partout, et au milieu d'eux vous serez comme la lune dans un grand nuage blanc . . . Je vous les donnerai tous. Je n'en ai que cent, et il n'y a aucun roi du monde qui possède des paons comme les miens, mais je vous les donnerai tous. Seulement, il faut me délier de ma

parole et ne pas me demander ce que vous m'avez demandé. [*Il vide la coupe de vin.*]

SALOME.

Donnez-moi la tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODIAS

C'est bien dit, ma fille ! Vous, vous êtes ridicule avec vos paons.

HÉRODE

Taisez-vous. Vous criez toujours. Vous criez comme une bête de proie. Il ne faut pas crier comme cela. Votre voix m'ennuie. Taisez-vous, je vous dis . . . Salomé, pensez à ce que vous faites. Cet homme vient peut-être de Dieu. Je suis sûr qu'il vient de Dieu. C'est un saint homme. Le doigt de Dieu l'a touché. Dieu a mis dans sa bouche des mots terribles. Dans le palais, comme dans le désert, Dieu est toujours avec lui . . . Au moins, c'est possible. On ne sait pas, mais il est possible que Dieu soit pour lui et avec lui. Aussi peut-être que s'il mourrait, il m'arriverait un malheur. Enfin, il a dit que le jour où il mourrait il arriverait un malheur à quelqu'un. Ce ne peut être qu'à moi. Souvenez-

vous, j'ai glissé dans le sang quand je suis entré ici. Aussi j'ai entendu un battement d'ailes dans l'air, un battement d'ailes gigantesques. Ce sont de très mauvais présages. Et il y en avait d'autres. Je suis sûr qu'il y en avait d'autres, quoique je ne les ai pas vus bien ! Salomé, vous ne voulez pas qu'un malheur m'arrive ? Vous ne voulez pas cela. Enfin, écoutez-moi.

SALOMÉ

Donnez-moi la tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODE

Vous voyez, vous ne m'écoutez pas. Mais, soyez calme. Moi, je suis très calme. Je suis tout à fait calme. Écoutez. J'ai des bijoux cachés ici que même votre mère n'a jamais vus, des bijoux tout à fait extraordinaires. J'ai un collier de perles à quatre rangs. On dirait des lunes enchaînées de rayons d'argent. On dirait cinquante lunes captives dans un filet d'or. Une reine l'a porté sur l'ivoire de ses seins. Toi, quand tu le porteras, tu seras aussi belle qu'une reine. J'ai des améthystes de deux espèces. Une qui est noire comme le vin. L'autre qui est rouge comme du vin qu'on a coloré avec de l'eau. J'ai

des topazes jaunes comme les yeux des tigres, et des topazes roses comme les yeux des pigeons, et des topazes vertes comme les yeux des chats. J'ai des opales qui brûlent toujours avec une flamme qui est très froide, des opales qui attristent les esprits et ont peur des ténèbres. J'ai des onyx semblables aux prunelles d'une morte. J'ai des sélénites qui changent quand la lune change et deviennent pâles quand elles voient le soleil. J'ai des saphirs grands comme des œufs et bleus comme des fleurs bleues. Le mer erre dedans, et la lune ne vient jamais troubler le bleu de ses flots. J'ai des chrysolithes et des béryls, j'ai des chrysoprases et des rubis, j'ai des sardonix et des hyacinthes, et des calcédoines et je vous les donnerai tous, mais tous, et j'ajouterai d'autres choses. Le roi des Indes vient justement de m'envoyer quatre éventails faits de plumes de perroquets, et le roi de Numidie une robe faite de plumes d'autruche. J'ai un cristal qu'il n'est pas permis aux femmes de voir et que même les jeunes hommes ne doivent regarder qu'après avoir été flagellés de verges. Dans un coffret de nacre j'ai trois turquoises merveilleuses. Quand on les porte sur le front on peut imaginer des choses qui n'existent pas, et quand on les porte dans la main

on peut rendre les femmes stériles. Ce sont des trésors de grande valeur. Ce sont des trésors sans prix. Et ce n'est pas tout. Dans un coffret d'ébène j'ai deux coupes d'ambre qui ressemblent à des pommes d'or. Si un ennemi verse du poison dans ces coupes elles deviennent comme des pommes d'argent. Dans un coffret incrusté d'ambre j'ai des sandales incrustées de verre. J'ai des manteaux qui viennent du pays des Sères et des bracelets garnis d'escarboucles et de jade qui viennent de la ville d'Euphrate. . . Enfin, que veux-tu, Salomé? Dis-moi ce que tu désires et je te le donnerai. Je te donnerai tout ce que tu demanderas, sauf une chose. Je te donnerai tout ce que je possède, sauf une vie. Je te donnerai le manteau du grand prêtre. Je te donnerai le voile du sanctuaire.

LES JUIFS

Oh! Oh!

SALOMÉ

Donne-moi la tête d'Iokanaan.

HÉRODE [*s'affaissant sur son siège*]

Qu'on lui donne ce qu'elle demande! C'est

bien la fille de sa mère. [*Le premier soldat s'approche. Hérodiad prend de la main du tétrarque le bague de la mort et la donne au soldat qui l'apporte immédiatement au bourreau...Le bourreau a l'air effaré.*] Qui a pris ma bague? Il y avait une bague à ma main droit. Qui a bu mon vin? Il y avait du vin dans ma coupe. Elle était pleine de vin. Quelqu'un l'a bu! Oh! je suis sûr qu'il va arriver un malheur à quelqu'un. [*Le bourreau descend dans la citerne.*] Ah! pourquoi ai-je donné ma parole? Les rois ne doivent jamais donner leur parole. S'ils ne la gardent pas, c'est terrible. S'ils la gardent, c'est terrible aussi . . .

HÉRODIAS

Je trouve que ma fille a bien fait.

HÉRODE

Je suis sûr qu'il va arriver un malheur.

SALOMÉ [*Elle se penche sur la citerne et écoute.*]

Il n'y a pas de bruit. Je n'entends rien. Pourquoi ne crie-t-il pas, cet homme? Ah! si quelqu'un cherchait à me tuer, je crierais, je me débattrais, je ne voudrais pas souffrir . . .

Frappe, frappe, Naaman. Frappe, je te dis . . . Non. Je n'entends rien. Il y a un silence affreux. Ah ! quelque chose est tombé par terre. J'ai entendu quelque chose tomber. C'était l'épée du bourreau. Il a peur, cet esclave ! Il a laissé tomber son épée. Il n'ose pas le tuer. C'est un lâche, cet esclave ! Il faut envoyer des soldats. [*Elle voit le page d'Hérodias et s'adresse à lui.*] Viens ici. Tu as été l'ami de celui qui est mort, n'est-ce pas ? Eh bien, il n'y a pas eu assez de morts. Dites aux soldats qu'ils descendent et m'apportent ce que je demande, ce que le tétrarque m'a promis, ce qui m'appartient. [*Le page recule. Elle s'adresse aux soldats.*] Venez ici, soldats. Descendez dans cette citerne, et apportez-moi la tête de cet homme. [*Les soldats reculent.*] Tétrarque, tétrarque, commandez à vos soldats de m'apporter la tête d'Iokanaan. [*Un grand bras noir, le bras du bourreau, sort de la citerne apportant sur un bouclier d'argent la tête d'Iokanaan. Salomé la saisit. Hérode se cache le visage avec son manteau. Hérodias sourit et s'évente. Les Nazaréens s'agenouillent et commencent à prier.*] Ah ! tu n'as pas voulu me laisser baiser ta bouche, Iokanaan. Eh bien ! je la baiserais maintenant. Je la mordrai avec mes

dents comme on mord un fruit mûr. Oui, je baisera ta bouche, Iokanaan. Je te l'ai dit, n'est-ce pas? je te l'ai dit. Et bien! je la baisera maintenant . . . Mais pourquoi ne me regardes-tu pas, Iokanaan? Tes yeux qui étaient si terribles, qui étaient si pleins de colère et de mépris, ils sont fermés maintenant. Pourquoi sont-ils fermés? Ouvre tes yeux! Soulève tes paupières, Iokanaan. Pourquoi ne me regardes-tu pas? As-tu peur de moi, Iokanaan, que tu ne veuilles pas me regarder? . . . Et ta langue était comme un serpent rouge dardant des poisons, elle ne remue plus, elle ne dit rien maintenant, Iokanaan, cette vipère rouge qui a vomi son venin sur moi. C'est étrange, n'est-ce pas? Comment se fait-il que la vipère rouge ne remue plus? . . . Tu n'as pas voulu de moi, Iokanaan. Tu m'as rejetée. Tu m'as dit des choses infâmes. Tu m'as traitée comme une courtisane, comme une prostituée, moi, Salomé, fille d'Hérodiade, Princesse de Judée! Eh bien, Iokanaan, moi je vis encore, mais toi tu es mort et ta tête m'appartient. Je puis en faire ce que je veux. Je puis la jeter aux chiens et aux oiseaux de l'air. Ce que laisseront les chiens, les oiseaux de l'air le mangeront . . . Ah! Iokanaan, Iokanaan, tu as été le seul

homme que j'ai aimé. Tous les autres hommes m'inspirent du dégoût. Mais, toi, tu étais beau. Ton corps était une colonne d'ivoire sur un socle d'argent. C'était un jardin plein de colombes et de lis d'argent. C'était une tour d'argent ornée de boucliers d'ivoire. Il n'y avait rien au monde d'aussi blanc que tons corps. Il n'y avait rien au monde d'aussi noir que tes cheveux. Dans le monde tout entier il n'y avait rien d'aussi rouge que ta bouche. Ta voix était un encensoir qui répandait d'étranges parfums, et quand je te regardais j'entendais une musique étrange ! Ah ! pourquoi ne m'as-tu pas regardée, Iokanaan ? Derrière tes mains et tes blasphèmes tu as caché ton visage. Tu as mis sur tes yeux le bandeau de celui qui veut voir son Dieu. Eh bien, tu l'as vu, ton Dieu, Iokanaan, mais moi, moi . . . tu ne m'as jamais vue. Si tu m'avais vue, tu m'aurais aimée. Moi, je t'ai vu, Iokanaan, et je t'ai aimé. Oh ! comme je t'ai aimé. Je t'aime encore, Iokanaan. Je n'aime que toi . . . J'ai soif de ta beauté. J'ai faim de ton corps. Et ni le vin, ni les fruits ne peuvent apaiser mon désir. Que ferai-je, Iokanaan, maintenant ? Ni les fleuves ni les grandes eaux, ne pourraient éteindre ma passion. J'étais une Princesse, tu m'as

dédaignée. J'étais une vierge, tu m'as déflorée. J'étais chaste, tu as rempli mes veines de feu . . . Ah! Ah! pourquoi ne m'as-tu pas regardée, Iokanaan? Si tu m'avais regardée tu m'aurais aimée. Je sais bien que tu m'aurais aimée, et le mystère de l'amour est plus grand que le mystère de la mort. Il ne faut regarder que l'amour.

HÉRODE

Elle est monstrueuse, ta fille, elle est tout à fait monstrueuse. Enfin, ce qu'elle a fait est un grand crime. Je suis sûr que c'est un crime contre un Dieu inconnu.

HÉRODIAS

J'approuve ce que ma fille a fait, et je veux rester ici maintenant.

HÉRODE [*se levant*]

Ah! l'épouse incestueuse qui parle! Viens! Je ne veux pas rester ici. Viens, je te dis. Je suis sûr qu'il va arriver un malheur. Manasse, Issachar, Ozias, éteignez les flambeaux. Je ne veux pas regarder les choses. Je ne veux pas que les choses me regardent. Éteignez les flam-

beaux. Cachez la lune ! Cachez les étoiles ! Cachons-nous dans notre palais, Hérodiad. Je commence à avoir peur.

[Les esclaves éteignent les flambeaux. Les étoiles disparaissent. Un grand nuage noir passe à travers la lune et la cache complètement. La scène devient tout à fait sombre. Le tétraque commence à monter l'escalier.]

LA VOIX DE SALOMÉ

Ah ! j'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan, j'ai baisé ta bouche. Il y avait une âcre saveur sur tes lèvres. Était-ce la saveur du sang ? . . . Mais, peut-être est-ce la saveur de l'amour. On dit que l'amour a une âcre saveur . . . Mais, qu'importe ? Qu'importe ? J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan, j'ai baisé ta bouche.

[Un rayon de lune tombe sur Salomé et l'éclaire.]

HÉRODE *[se retournant et voyant Salomé]*

Tuez cette femme !

[Les soldats s'élancent et écrasent sous leurs boucliers Salomé, fille d'Hérodiad, Princesse de Judée.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY
BY WALTER LEDGER

FRENCH

Original Edition

1. Oscar Wilde | *Salomé* | drame en un acte | (publishers' device) | Paris | Librairie de l'Art Indépendant | 11, rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, 11 | Londres | Elkin Mathews et John Lane | The Bodley-Head. Vigo Street. | 1893 | Tous droits réservés |

Sm. 4to. ($7\frac{7}{8}$ by $5\frac{7}{8}$), violet paper wrapper lettered on front in silver. Printed on wove paper, uncut edges. Pp. 84. Text occupies pages 9 to 84. The dedication reads: A mon Ami | Pierre Louÿs | . The edition was limited to 600 copies, of which 500 were for sale. Price 5s. net; according to the Catalogue de la Librairie Française, 10 francs. Published February 1893.

A few copies, the exact number of which is not known, were printed on Van Gelder handmade paper with uncut edges.

Reprints

2. *Salomé* | tragédie lyrique en un acte | paroles tirées de la *Salomé* d'Oscar Wilde | musique

84 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

de | A. Mariotte | (fleuron) | Paris | Imprimerie et Librairie Centrales des Chemins de Fer | Imprimerie Chaix | Société anonyme au capital de trois millions | Rue Bergère, 20 | 1907 |

16mo. ($7\frac{1}{2}$ by 5), light-yellow paper wrapper lettered on front as above. The lettering on the cover is closer than that on the title-page to admit at top, above a double-lined bar: Concours Musical de la Ville de Paris | 1904-1906 |

Pp. 32, the text beginning on page 5. The drama is divided into two parts and seven scenes. It is an adaptation by M. Mariotte as a libretto for his opera. Only 50 copies were printed for the use of the Jury, and none was issued or sold to the public. (January 1907.)

3. Oscar Wilde | Salomé | Drame en un Acte | Paris | Édition à petit nombre | Imprimée pour les Souscripteurs | 1907 |

4to. ($10\frac{3}{4}$ by $7\frac{5}{8}$), olive-green paper wrapper drawn over with printed label on front. Pp. 84, text beginning on page 9. With sixteen illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley.

A slip affixed to front end-paper states that the edition is issued with the authorisation of Mr. Robert Ross and with the consent of Messrs. Methuen and Co. Another slip affixed to the back of half-title page states that the issue is limited to 500 copies, Nos. 1-100 being printed on *vergé d'Arches*, and Nos. 101-400 on *papier antique vergé Anglais*, each copy being numbered by hand. The publisher is Charles Carrington of Paris.

4. Salomé | drame musical en un acte | poème de | Oscar Wilde | musique de | Richard Strauss | prix net: 1 fr. 50 cent. |

Methuen & Co. | 36 Essex Street W. C. |
 London | Adolph Fürstner | Berlin W. |
Droits de traduction, de reproduction, de re-
présentation | et d'analyse réservés | A 5536
 F | N.D. (1907).

12mo. ($7\frac{1}{4}$ by $4\frac{7}{8}$), red paper wrapper lettered in gold. Pp. vi + 39, containing the text as adapted for Strauss's opera, which was performed in French for the first time at the Théâtre de la Monnaie at Bruxelles on March 15, 1907. Printed in Edinburgh for sale in France and Belgium. Published March 1907.

NOTE.—In addition to the operas of Richard Strauss and A. Mariotte, *Salomé* has been set to music by Henry Hadley, an American composer. The work, which is described as a Symphonic Poem, was performed for the first time in England at Queen's Hall on August 24, 1909.

5. *Salomé*. | A Florentine Tragedy. | Vera. | By |
 Oscar Wilde | Methuen and Co. | 36 Essex
 Street W. C. | London | N.D. (1908 February
 13).

Demy 8vo. ($8\frac{1}{4}$ by $5\frac{3}{4}$), cream-coloured buckram boards lettered and decorated in gold with design by Charles Ricketts; outer wrapper of green with same design reproduced in darker green. Printed on wove handmade paper, gilt top, edges uncut. The text of the play occupies p. 5 to p. 82. Price 12s. 6d. net.

The Same. 80 copies on Japanese vellum with parchment covers and grey outer wrapper lettered as above. Price 42s. net.

TRANSLATIONS

AUSTRIAN

6. Oscar Wildes | Sämtliche Werke | in deutscher
Sprache | Achter Band | Salomé | Die Her-
zogin von Padua | (device) | Wiener Verlag |
Wien und Leipzig | 1908 |

8vo. ($7\frac{1}{2}$ by $5\frac{1}{4}$), grey ribbed wrapper lettered and decorated. Text occupies from p. 7 to p. 56. The translation is by Frieda Uhl. Also issued bound. Price 2 and 3 marks. Also an edition of 100 numbered copies on handmade paper, bound in crimson roan, price 7 marks.

7. Oscar Wilde | Salomé | Tragödie in einem
Akt | Übersetzt von Frieda Uhl | (device) |
Wiener Verlag | Wiener und Leipzig | 1908 |

12mo. (7 by $4\frac{7}{8}$), glazed white paper wrapper lettered, with portrait on front. Text occupies from p. 5 to p. 54. This is a reprint of No. 6 with new cover and title-page. Price 1 mark.

CZECH (BOHEMIA)

8. Oscar Wilde: | Salome | z anglického originálu
přeložila | Adi-Hidári-Ho. | Vzdělavací
bibliotékysbirky Moderni čethy sy. 60 |
(fleuron) | V Praze. | Redakcí a Nákladem
Karla Stan. Sokola. | N.D. (?1905).

16mo. ($5\frac{7}{8}$ by $4\frac{1}{2}$), light-grey wrapper lettered in black and red on front. The text occupies from p. 7 to p. 47. Price 40 heller.

9. Oscar Wilde: | Salome. | drama o jednom dějství. | přeložil | Otakar Theer. | Úvod napsal V. Tille. | (device) | V Praze. | Nákladem J. Otty. | 1905. |

16mo. (6 by $4\frac{1}{8}$), salmon-pink wrapper lettered in red-brown. The text occupies from p. 1 to p. 78; biographical preface p. iii to p. xix. This volume is No. 450-451 of the series "Světová Knihovna." Price 40 heller.

DUTCH

10. Salomé | drama | in één bedrijf | van | Oscar Wilde | (fleuron) | Utrecht | J. L. Beijers | N.D. (1893).

Upright 12mo. ($7\frac{3}{8}$ by $3\frac{7}{8}$), handmade paper, grey wrapper, lettered and decorated in red and silver. The text occupies 103 pages. Price 1 fr. 25.

ENGLISH

11. Salome | a Tragedy in one | Act: translated | from the French | of Oscar Wilde: | pictured by | Aubrey Beardsley | London: Elkin Mathews | & John Lane | Boston: Copeland & Day | 1894 |

Sm. 4to. ($8\frac{1}{4}$ by 6), light-blue buckram boards, lettered in gold. The text of this edition occupies 67 pages.

88 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

500 copies printed for England, price 15s. net; also 100 copies on large paper ($8\frac{5}{8}$ by $6\frac{3}{4}$), olive-green silk boards, the decorations and illustrations printed upon Japanese vellum, price 30s. net. The dedication reads: To my friend | Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas | the translator of | my play |

12. *Salome* | a Tragedy in one Act | translated from the | French of Oscar Wilde | London: John Lane, The Bodley Head | New York: John Lane Company, MCMVI |

Royal 16mo. ($6\frac{1}{4}$ by 5), white paper boards, lettered and decorated in grey-green ink. The text occupies 66 pages. Issued with orange-colour outer wrapper, price 2s. 6d. net.

Re-issued with the date: MCMVIII.

13. *Salome* | a Tragedy in one Act: trans- | lated from the French of | Oscar Wilde, with sixteen | drawings by Aubrey Beardsley | London: John Lane, The Bodley Head | New York: John Lane Company, MCMVII |

Foolscap 4to. ($8\frac{3}{4}$ by $6\frac{5}{8}$) bright-green cloth boards, decorated and lettered in gold. This edition has a note by Mr. Robert Ross on *Salome*, with facsimiles of programmes and three additional plates. The pictures are printed upon Japanese vellum. The text occupies 66 pages. Issued with orange-coloured outer wrapper. Published October 1906, price 10s. 6d. net.

14. *Salomé* | a Tragedy in one Act: | translated from the | French of Oscar Wilde | Pictured

by | Aubrey Beardsley | London | Melmoth
& Co. | 1904 |

4to. ($9\frac{1}{4}$ by $7\frac{1}{4}$), blue cloth boards, lettered, dated 1905 on back. 250 copies, price 21s. net. Also 50 copies on Japanese vellum, price 42s. net. This edition is unauthorised, and contains reproductions of Beardsley's illustrations, including the three additional ones. The text occupies from p. 11 to p. 75.

15. *Salomé* | by | Oscar Wilde | Paris | 1906 |

Sm. 4to. ($8\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{3}{4}$), light-blue cloth, bevelled boards, lettered in gold on back, with date: 1905. Text occupies from p. 11 to p. 75. No illustrations.

This is the same as the last, without illustrations and with a new title-page. Price 10s.

Published in America

16. *Salome* | a Tragedy in one | Act: translated |
from the French | of Oscar Wilde: | pictured
by | Aubrey Beardsley | San Francisco: | The
paper covered | Book Store | 1896 |

16mo. ($5\frac{1}{8}$ by $4\frac{5}{8}$), white glazed paper wrapper, front forming title-page. "List of Pictures" reproduced upon pink paper. The text occupies from p. 3 to p. 71. All the pictures are reproduced greatly reduced. Price 50 cents.

17. *Salomé* | a Tragedy in one Act | by | Oscar
Wilde | drawings by | Aubrey Beardsley |
John W. Luce & Company | Boston | 1906 |

8vo. ($7\frac{3}{4}$ by $5\frac{1}{4}$), black cloth boards, decorated and

90 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

lettered in gold. The text occupies 36 pages, and the illustrations are upon Japanese vellum. Price \$1.00.

18. *Salomé* | a Tragedy in one Act | by Oscar Wilde | Boston | John W. Luce & Company | 1906.

8vo. (7½ by 5), grey paper boards, lettered and decorated in green. Text occupies 36 pages. This edition is the same as the last, but is not illustrated, and title-page is re-set. Price 50 cents.

19. *The Same*. Bound up with "The Duchess of Padua" and "Vera: or, the Nihilists" in Vol. III. of *The Plays of | Oscar Wilde | etc.*, by the same publishers. 1906. Each play has separate pagination.

20. *Salome* | (*publishers' device*) | Oscar Wilde | H. M. Caldwell Co. | New York and Boston | N.D. (August 1907).

16mo. (5½ by 3¾), brown cloth boards, lettered in gold in a decorative panel. Frontispiece is an etching of "Salome." Text occupies 117 pages. This volume is No. 54 of the *Remarque Edition of Literary Masterpieces* (also called "Remarque Series"). Price from 40 cents to \$1.00, according to binding. Contains Wilde's dedication to Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas.

21. *Salome* | a play | by | Oscar Wilde | New York | F. M. Buckles & Company | 1906 |

Published with *The Duchess of Padua*, each play having separate pagination.

12mo. ($7\frac{1}{2}$ by $5\frac{1}{8}$), dark-blue cloth boards, white paper labels on front and back with titles of both plays. Text of *Salome* occupies p. 7 to p. 60. Price from \$1.00 to \$2.50, according to binding.

GERMAN

22. Salome | tragoedie in einem | akt von | Oscar Wilde | (facing which is :) Übertragung von | Hedwig Lachmann | Zeichnungen von | Marcus Behmer | Im Insel - verlage | Leipzig im Jahre 1903 | .

4to. ($8\frac{1}{2}$ by 6), white vellum paper wrapper, lettered in gold, and decorated. With 10 full-page illustrations, besides decorative border, etc. No pagination. Wrappers, or cloth boards; also 50 copies on Japanese vellum.

23. Salome | tragoedie in einem | akt von | Oscar Wilde | im Insel-verlage | (facing which is :) Übertragung von | Hedwig Lachmann | zeichnungen von | Marcus Behmer | Leipzig im jahre 1903.

The Same. 2nd edition, 1903.

The Same. 3rd edition.

The Same. 4th edition.

The Same. 5th edition.

Sm. 4to. ($6\frac{7}{8}$ by 5), dark-grey paper boards lettered in gold. Text occupies pages 11-75. Also issued in paper wrapper. This is the second edition of *Madame*

92 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

Lachmann's translation. Contains only two illustrations, reduced in size. Price 2 and 3 marks.

24. Salome | Drama in einem Aufzuge | von |
Oscar Wilde. | Ins Deutsche übertragen |
von | Isidore Leo Pavia | und | Hermann
Freiherrn von Teschenberg. | (device) | Leip-
zig | Verlag von Max Spohr | 1903 | .

The Same. 2nd edition, 1903.

The Same. 3rd edition, 1904.

8vo. ($8\frac{1}{2}$ by $5\frac{3}{4}$), blue-green paper wrapper lettered.
Text occupies pp. 5-44. Printed in German characters.
Price 1 mark.

25. Salome | Drama in einem Aufzug | von |
Oskar Wilde. | Ins Deutsche übertragen |
von | Dr. Kiefer. | Bühneneinrichtung mit
Dekorationsplan | Leipzig. | Druck und
Verlag von Philipp Reclam jun. | N.D.
(1904?).

16mo. ($5\frac{7}{8}$ by $3\frac{7}{8}$), salmon-coloured paper wrapper.
Text occupies pages 8-40. German characters. This is
No. 4497 of the *Universal-Bibliothek*. Price 20 pfennig.

26. Den Bühnen gegenüber Manuskript. | Sal-
ome. | Drama in einem Aufzuge | nach
Oskar Wilde's gleichnamiger Dichtung | in
deutscher Übersetzung von Hedwig Lach-
mann. | Musik | von | Richard Strauss. |

(fleuron) | Verlag und Eigentum von |
 Adolph Fürstner, Berlin W. | Alle Rechte,
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 N.D. (1905).

12mo. ($7\frac{1}{8}$ by $4\frac{1}{8}$), red paper wrapper, lettered,
 etc., in gold. Text occupies pages 5-47. This is the
 libretto for Strauss's Opera. Price 1 mark.

27. Erläuterungen | zu Meisterwerken der Ton-
 kunst, 13. Bd. | Richard Strauss: | Salome. |
 Drama in einem Aufzug. | Geschichtlich,
 szenisch und musikalisch analysiert, | mit
 zahlreichen Notenbeispielen | von | Max
 Chop. | Leipzig. | Druck und Verlag von
 Philipp Reclam jun. | N.D. (1908?).

16mo. ($5\frac{7}{8}$ by $3\frac{3}{4}$), salmon-coloured wrapper, let-
 tered. Printed in German characters. This is No. 4985
 of the *Universal-Bibliothek*. A handbook to Strauss's
 Opera. Pp. 45-95 contain an analysis of the music, with
 illustrations. Price 20 pfennig.

28. Oscar Wilde. Salome. Tragödie in einem
 Akt. Deutsche Übertragung von Hedwig
 Lachmann. Mit 15 Zeichnungen von Aubrey
 Beardsley in der Originalgrösse. 1908.

825 numbered copies: Nos. 1-100 on Japan paper,
 bound in leather, with silk slide-case, price 40 marks;

94 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

Nos. 101-825, text on Van Gelder handmade paper, illustrations on Strathmore Japan paper. Price 14 and 20 marks, according to binding.

GREEK

29. ΠΑΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΑ | ΕΤΟΣ Σ' 30 | ΑΠΡΙΛΙΟΥ 1907 |
(Panathenaia, 30th April 1907, No. 158.
Athens. Odos Aristotelous 35.)

An illustrated magazine. Sm. folio (11½ by 8). The text of ΣΑΛΩΜΗ (Salomé) occupies pages 33-49.

30. Oscar Wilde | ΣΑΛΩΜΗ | (circular device inscribed ΠΑΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΑ) | ΑΘΗΝΑΙ | ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ-ΠΑΝΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ | 1907 |

4to. (11⅝ by 8⅞), terra-cotta coloured wrapper. Text occupies pages 3-18, printed in two columns. This is the same translation as the last, in book form. Price about 1 drachma.

ITALIAN

31. Oscar Wilde | Sàlome | poema drammatico |
Unica versione italiana consentita dall'
Autore | di | G. G. Rocco | (fleuron) |
Napoli | Ferdinando Bideri Editore | S.
Pietro a Majella, 17 | 1906 |

16mo. (7⅝ by 5), cream-coloured paper wrapper, lettered in black and red, and decorated in violet. With preface by Biagio Chiara. Text occupies pages 1-80. This volume is No. 34 of the "Biblioteca Varia Bideri." Price 2 lire.

MAGYAR (HUNGARY)

32. Oscar Wilde | Salome | Szinmú | fordította és bevezetéssel ellátta | Szini Gyula | (fleuron) | Budapest, | Lampel R. Könyvkereskedése | Wodianer F. és fiai) Részv.—Társ. | N.D. (1908).

16mo. ($5\frac{7}{8}$ by $3\frac{7}{8}$), pale orange wrapper, lettered. Text occupies p. 19 to p. 58. This is No. 479 of the "Magyar Konystar." Price 30 fillér.

POLISH

33. Oskar Wilde | Salome | Dramat w 1 akcie | Przekiad Jadwigi Gasowskiej | N.D. (1904).

Sm. 4to. ($6\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{3}{8}$), grey mottled paper wrapper, lettered and decorated. With five illustrations. The text occupies pages 5-93. Price 1 mark 25 pfg.

RUSSIAN

34. Oscar Wilde | Salomeja | Drama | perevod W. & L. Andruson | Knigoizda telstwo "Gryf" | Moskwa 1904 |

4to. Price 1 rouble.

35. Саломея. | Трагедія въ одномъ дѣйствіи | Оскара Уайльда. | Переводъ съ Англійскаго Е. Брикъ. | Москва. | Книгоиздательство «Польза» | В. Антикъ и Ко. |

96 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

типо-лит. Русскаго Товарищества, Москва | Телефоны: 18-35 и 53-95. | н. д. (1907).

16mo. (5¾ by 4), yellow paper wrapper, lettered and decorated in dark blue. Text occupies pp. 3-51. This volume is No. 21 of Универсальная Библиотека. (Universal Library.) Price 10 kopeks. This translation is by E. Brick from the English. 10,000 copies of the first impressions were printed.

36. Саломея. | Драма въ одномъ дѣйствіи | Оскара Уайльда. | Второе изданіе. Авторизованный переводъ съ Французскаго | оригинала | М. Ликиардопуло. | Съ предисловіями переводчика и Роберта Росса. | Москва. | Книгоиздательство «Польза» | В. Антикъ и Ко. | типолит. Русскаго товарищества. Москва. | Телефоны: 18-35 и 53-95 | н. д. (1908).

Second Edition of No. 35. A new translation, by Michael Lykiardopoulos, from the French. No. 21 of the same series. Text occupies pp. (11)-47. There is a Preface by the translator, and the Introduction by Робертъ Россъ [Robert Ross]. Price 10 kopeks. 20,000 copies printed.

The Same. 3rd Edition. 20,000 copies. 1909.

37. Саломея. | Трагедія въ одномъ дѣйствіи | Pp. 279-336 of Sablin's Complete Works of Oscar Wilde. Vol. III. Moscow, 1906.

The Same. 2nd edition. 1908.

38. Оскаръ Уайльдъ. | Саломея. | Драма въ одномъ дѣйствіи. | Переводъ съ Фран-

цузскаго | оригинала К. Д. Бальмонта |
и Ек. Андреевой. | К. Д. Бальмонтъ. |
Предисловіе. | Поэзія Оскара Уайльда. |
О любви. | Книголюбительскія прило-
женія. Обри Бирдслей. | Восемь рисун-
ковъ. | Сергѣй Маковский. | Объ иллю-
страціяхъ Бирдслея. | N.D. (1908).

Sm. 4to. ($7\frac{1}{8}$ by $5\frac{3}{8}$), buff-coloured wrapper, lettered. Contains illustrations by Beardsley reduced in size. The translation is by Constantine Balmont and C. Andreieva. Published in the "Pantheon Series" at St. Petersburg. Price 30 kopeks.

Also an Edition on better paper, blue-ribbed paper wrapper, lettered and decorated on front in gold and green. Price 1 rouble.

39. The Dance of the Seven Veils. A Russian adaptation for the Theatre. By the Countess Radosheffsky.

Prompt copies only. Printed by the publishers of the review, *Theatre and Art*, about 1906, at St. Petersburg.

SPANISH

40. Oscar Wilde | Salomé | drama en un acto |
Traducción del inglés | por | J. Pérez Jorba
Y B. Rodriguez | (vignette) | Madrid | B.
Rodriguez Serra, editor | Flor baja, núm. 9. |
N.D.

18mo. ($6\frac{7}{8}$ by $4\frac{1}{4}$), glazed white paper wrapper, lettered and decorated in red and black. Illustrations by L. Valera. Text occupies pages 27-127. Price 2 pesetas.

Catalan Dialect

- 41 Salomé | Drama en un acte de | Oscar Wilde |
 Traducció Catalana de | Joaquim Pena |
 Barcelona MCMVIII |

Sm. fol. (11 by $7\frac{1}{2}$), crimson paper wrapper, lettered and decorated in black on front, lettered along back: Wilde | Salomé | 1908 | ; and on end wrapper: Llibreria de A. Verdgaueu | Rambla del Mitg | 5 pessetes |

Pp. 81, the text beginning on page 9. Printed in black and red on wove paper, edges uncut. Text is divided into five scenes each headed by a decorative panel in two colours after designs by Adria Gual. Colophon with date of printing: xv de Juny de MCMVIII, etc., on leaf at end.

SWEDISH

42. Salome | sorgspel i en akt | af | Oscar Wilde |
 (leaf) | Öfversatt af Edv. Alkman | (device) |
 Stockholm | Wahlström & Widstrand | N.D.
 (1895).

(?)8vo, white paper wrapper (?). 500 copies. Text occupies pages 5-68. Price 2 kronen. Also 50 numbered copies on large paper, 4to. (10 by $7\frac{1}{4}$), white paper wrapper, lettered and decorated, price 5 kronen.

43. Salome | sorgspel i en akt | af | Oscar Wilde |
 öfversatt af Edv. Alkman | (publishers' device) |
 Stockholm | Wahlström & Widstrand |
 N.D. (1906.)

12mo. ($7\frac{5}{8}$ by $5\frac{1}{8}$), white vellum paper wrapper

lettered in red and black; has "Andra Upplagan" (2nd edition) and the date 1906 on front of wrapper. Text occupies pages 7-112. Price 1 kr. 50 öre. Type reset in a smaller format. This is the 2nd edition of No. 42.

YIDDISH

44. סאַלאָמע. | אַסקאַר וויילד. | פערלאַג „פראַגרעס“. |
 אַ טראַגעדיע אין איין אַקט. (here follow five lines
 איבערזעצט פון י. ענטין. | (summary description)
 לאַנדאָן 1909 | אַרויסגעגעבן פון מ. זוסמאַן
 90 ניו דזיד ווייטשעפּעל א.

[Translation: Edition "Progress" | Oscar Wilde |
 Salome | a tragedy in one act | (here follows
 the summary description) | translated by
 J. Entin | Published by M. Sussman | London
 1909 | 90 New Road, Whitechapel, E.]

12mo. (7¼ by 5¼), white glazed paper pictorial wrapper lettered on front, along back, and on end where the publisher's and printer's names and addresses appear in English.

Printed in Hebrew characters upon white wove paper, uncut edges, 52 pages, including title-page as above (p. 3). Has list of persons of the play. Text occupies pp. 5 to 52. A photograph of the author, reproduced on thin glazed paper, forms the frontispiece. The price (given on front cover) is 7½ d., or 18 cents, or 32 kopeks.

45. פון | טראַגעדיע אין איין אַקט | סאַלאָמע. |
 איבערזעצט פון א. פּרומקין. | אַסקאַר וויילד. |
 לאַנדאָן 1909. | אַרויסגעגעבן פון ל. פּרידמאַן,
 געדרוקט ביי י. גאַראַדיצקי, 43 מייל ענד דזיד,
 לאַנדאָן, איסט.

100 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

[Translation: Salome | A Drama in one act | by |
Oscar Wilde | Translated by A. Frumkin |
Published by L. Friedman | | London 1909. |
Printed by I. Naradicky, 48 Mile End Road,
London, E.]

8vo. ($7\frac{5}{8}$ by $5\frac{1}{8}$), pale-mauve wrapper, lettered in black as on title-page (with price added); back cover and both inside covers having advertisements. Text occupies pages 5 to 55. Price 20 kopeks; 10 cents; 5 pence.

THE Compiler of this Bibliography has not had an opportunity of examining the following editions described above:—

- No. 3, on *papier vergé d'Arches*.
- No. 14, on ordinary paper.
- No. 22, on Japanese vellum.
- No. 23, third, fourth and fifth editions.
- No. 28.
- No. 34.
- No. 36, third edition.
- No. 39.
- No. 42, on ordinary paper.

W. E. L.

September 16, 1909.

Salome:

A Tragedy in One Act:

Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde

TO MY FRIEND
LORD ALFRED BRUCE DOUGLAS
THE TRANSLATOR OF
MY PLAY

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

HEROD ANTIPAS, Tetrarch of Judæa

IOKANAAN, The Prophet

THE YOUNG SYRIAN, Captain of the Guard

TIGELLINUS, A young Roman

A CAPPADOCIAN

A NUBIAN

FIRST SOLDIER

SECOND SOLDIER

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

JEWS, NAZARENES, ETC.

A SLAVE

NAAMAN, The Executioner

HERODIAS, Wife of the Tetrarch

SALOME, Daughter of Herodias

THE SLAVES OF SALOME

SALOME.

SCENE—*A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set above the banqueting hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. The moon is shining very brightly.*

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. One might fancy she was looking for dead things.

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THE YOUNG SYRIAN

She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. One might fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

[*Noise in the banqueting-hall.*]

FIRST SOLDIER

What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

SECOND SOLDIER

The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

FIRST SOLDIER

Why do they dispute about their religion?

SECOND SOLDIER

I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

FIRST SOLDIER

I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

She is very beautiful to-night.

FIRST SOLDIER

The Tetrarch has a sombre aspect.

SECOND SOLDIER

Yes; he has a sombre aspect.

FIRST SOLDIER

He is looking at something.

SECOND SOLDIER

He is looking at some one.

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FIRST SOLDIER

At whom is he looking?

SECOND SOLDIER

I cannot tell.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

You must not look at her. You look too much at her.

FIRST SOLDIER

Herodias has filled the cup of the Tetrarch.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

Is that the Queen Herodias, she who wears a black mitre sewed with pearls, and whose hair is powdered with blue dust?

FIRST SOLDIER

Yes; that is Herodias, the Tetrarch's wife.

SECOND SOLDIER

The Tetrarch is very fond of wine. He has wine of three sorts. One which is brought from

the Island of Samothrace, and is purple like the cloak of Cæsar.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

I have never seen Cæsar.

SECOND SOLDIER

Another that comes from a town called Cyprus, and is as yellow as gold.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

I love gold.

SECOND SOLDIER

And the third is a wine of Sicily. That wine is as red as blood.

THE NUBIAN

The gods of my country are very fond of blood. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens: fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But I am afraid that we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

In my country there are no gods left. The Romans have driven them out. There are some who say that they have hidden themselves in the

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mountains, but I do not believe it. Three nights I have been on the mountains seeking them everywhere. I did not find them, and at last I called them by their names, and they did not come. I think they are dead.

FIRST SOLDIER

The Jews worship a God that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

I cannot understand that.

FIRST SOLDIER

In fact, they only believe in things that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

That seems to me altogether ridiculous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he cometh the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the rose. The eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The sucking child shall put his hand upon the dragon's lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.

SECOND SOLDIER

Make him be silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

FIRST SOLDIER

No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too. Every day when I give him to eat he thanks me.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

Who is he?

FIRST SOLDIER

A prophet.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

What is his name?

FIRST SOLDIER

Iokanaan.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

Whence comes he?

FIRST SOLDIER

From the desert, where he fed on locusts and wild honey. He was clothed in camel's hair, and round his loins he had a leathern belt. He

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was very terrible to look upon. A great multitude used to follow him. He even had disciples.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

What is he talking of?

FIRST SOLDIER

We can never tell. Sometimes he says things that affright one, but it is impossible to understand what he says.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

May one see him?

FIRST SOLDIER

No. The Tetrarch has forbidden it.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies. They are just like white butterflies.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

What is that to you? Why do you look at her? You must not look at her. . . . Something terrible may happen.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

[*Pointing to the cistern.*] What a strange prison!

SECOND SOLDIER

It is an old cistern.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

An old cistern! That must be a poisonous place in which to dwell!

SECOND SOLDIER

Oh no! For instance, the Tetrarch's brother, his elder brother, the first husband of Herodias the Queen, was imprisoned there for twelve years. It did not kill him. At the end of the twelve years he had to be strangled.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

Strangled? Who dared to do that?

SECOND SOLDIER

[*Pointing to the Executioner, a huge negro.*]
That man yonder, Naaman.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

He was not afraid?

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SECOND SOLDIER

Oh no! The Tetrarch sent him the ring.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

What ring?

SECOND SOLDIER

The death ring. So he was not afraid.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

Yet it is a terrible thing to strangle a king.

FIRST SOLDIER

Why? Kings have but one neck, like other folk.

THE CAPPADOCIAN

I think it terrible.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

The Princess is getting up! She is leaving the table! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is! Never have I seen her so pale.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

She is like a dove that has strayed. . . . She
is like a narcissus trembling in the wind. . . .
She is like a silver flower.

[*Enter Salome.*]

SALOME

I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the
Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's
eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange
that the husband of my mother looks at me like
that. I know not what it means. Of a truth I
know it too well.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

You have left the feast, Princess?

SALOME

How sweet is the air here! I can breathe
here! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem
who are tearing each other in pieces over their
foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink
and drink and spill their wine on the pave-
ment, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted
eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled
in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle,
with long nails of jade and russet cloaks, and

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Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Will you be seated, Princess.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Why do you speak to her? Oh! something terrible will happen. Why do you look at her?

SALOME

How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, a little silver flower. She is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin. She has the beauty of a virgin. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Behold! the Lord hath come. The Son of Man is at hand. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the nymphs have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves in the forests.

SALOME

Who was that who cried out?

SECOND SOLDIER

The prophet, Princess.

SALOME

Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER

We know nothing of that, Princess. It was the prophet Iokanaan who cried out.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

SALOME

He says terrible things about my mother, does he not?

SECOND SOLDIER

We never understand what he says, Princess.

SALOME

Yes; he says terrible things about her.

[*Enter a Slave.*]

THE SLAVE

Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

SALOME

I will not return.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Pardon me, Princess, but if you return not some misfortune may happen.

SALOME

Is he an old man, this prophet?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

SALOME

This prophet . . . is he an old man?

FIRST SOLDIER

No, Princess, he is quite young.

SECOND SOLDIER

One cannot be sure. There are those who say that he is Elias.

SALOME

Who is Elias?

SECOND SOLDIER

A prophet of this country in bygone days,
Princess.

THE SLAVE

What answer may I give the Tetrarch from
the Princess?

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Rejoice not, O land of Palestine, because the
rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from
the seed of the serpent shall come a basilisk, and
that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

SALOME

What a strange voice! I would speak with
him.

FIRST SOLDIER

I fear it may not be, Princess. The Tetrarch
does not suffer any one to speak with him. He
has even forbidden the high priest to speak with
him.

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SALOME

I desire to speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER

It is impossible, Princess.

SALOME

I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Would it not be better to return to the banquet?

SALOME

Bring forth this prophet.

[*Exit the Slave.*]

FIRST SOLDIER

We dare not, Princess.

SALOME

[*Approaching the cistern and looking down into it.*] How black it is, down there! It must be terrible to be in so black a hole! It is like a tomb. . . . [*To the soldiers.*] Did you not hear me? Bring out the prophet. I would look on him.

SECOND SOLDIER

Princess, I beg you, do not require this of us.

SALOME

You are making me wait upon your pleasure.

FIRST SOLDIER

Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

SALOME

[*Looking at the young Syrian.*] Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Oh! what is going to happen? I am sure that something terrible will happen.

SALOME

[*Going up to the young Syrian.*] Thou wilt do this thing for me, wilt thou not, Narraboth? Thou wilt do this thing for me. I have ever been kind towards thee. Thou wilt do it for me. I would but look at him, this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often I have heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think he is afraid of him, the Tetrarch. Art thou, ever thou, also afraid of him, Narraboth?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

I fear him not, Princess; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

SALOME

Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth, and to-morrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers I will let fall for thee a little flower, a little green flower.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

SALOME

[*Smiling.*] Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth. Thou knowest that thou wilt do this thing for me. And on the morrow when I shall pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at thee through the muslin veils, I will look at thee, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at thee. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! thou knowest that thou wilt do what I ask of thee. Thou knowest it. . . . I know that thou wilt do this thing.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

[*Signing to the third soldier.*] Let the prophet come forth. . . . The Princess Salome desires to see him.

SALOME

Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Oh! How strange the moon looks! Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

She has a strange aspect! She is like a little princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little princess. [*The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salome looks at him and steps slowly back.*]

IOKANAAN

Where is he whose cup of abominations is now full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

SALOME

Of whom is he speaking?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

No one can tell, Princess.

IOKANAAN

Where is she who saw the images of men painted on the walls, even the images of the Chaldæans painted with colours, and gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into the land of Chaldæa?

SALOME

It is of my mother that he is speaking.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Oh no, Princess.

SALOME

Yes: it is of my mother that he is speaking.

IOKANAAN

Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and crowns of many colours on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of the Egyptians, who are clothed

in fine linen and hyacinth, whose shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Go, bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent her of her iniquities. Though she will not repent, but will stick fast in her abominations, go bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

SALOME

Ah, but he is terrible, he is terrible!

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

SALOME

It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes burned by torches in a tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black caverns where the dragons live, the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons. . . . Do you think he will speak again?

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THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

SALOME

How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste, as the moon is. He is like a moon-beam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be very cold, cold as ivory. . . . I would look closer at him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

No, no, Princess!

SALOME

I must look at him closer.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess! Princess!

IOKANAAN

Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me, with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone, It is not to her that I would speak.

SALOME

I am Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

IOKANAAN

Back ! daughter of Babylon ! Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sinning hath come up even to the ears of God.

SALOME

Speak again, Iokanaan. Thy voice is as music to mine ear.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess ! Princess ! Princess !

SALOME

Speak again ! Speak again, Iokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

IOKANAAN

Daughter of Sodom, come not near me ! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon thine head, and get thee to the desert, and seek out the Son of Man.

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SALOME

Who is he, the Son of Man? Is he as beautiful
as thou art, Iokanaan?

IOKANAAN

Get thee behind me! I hear in the palace the
beating of the wings of the angel of death.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess, I beseech thee to go within.

IOKANAAN

Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here
with thy sword? Whom seekest thou in this
palace? The day of him who shall die in a robe
of silver has not yet come.

SALOME

Iokanaan!

IOKANAAN

Who speaketh?

SALOME

I am amorous of thy body, Iokanaan! Thy
body is white, like the lilies of a field that the
mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white
like the snows that lie on the mountains of

Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses of the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea. . . . There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body.

IOKANAAN

Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

SALOME

Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall, where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whited sepulchre, full of loathsome things. It is horrible, thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Iokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in

the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide them by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair. . . . Suffer me to touch thy hair.

IOKANAAN

Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOME

Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns placed on thy head. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair. . . . It is thy mouth that I desire, Iokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid

the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. It is redder than the feet of the doves who inhabit the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings! . . . It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth. . . . Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN

Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! never!

SALOME

I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden

of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot endure it. . . . Princess, do not speak these things.

SALOME

I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Ah! [*He kills himself, and falls between Salome and Iokanaan.*]

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not say that some misfortune would happen? I, too, said it, and it has come to pass. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOLDIER

Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOME

Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN

Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias? Did I not tell thee that I had heard in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death?

SALOME

Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN

Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee. It is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee, and to all who call on Him He cometh, bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

SALOME

Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

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IOKANAAN

Cursed be thou! daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

SALOME

I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN

I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salome, thou art accursed. [*He goes down into the cistern.*]

SALOME

I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan; I will kiss thy mouth.

FIRST SOLDIER

We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond-trees,

and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.

SECOND SOLDIER

You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it.

FIRST SOLDIER

The Tetrarch will not come to this place. He never comes on the terrace. He is too much afraid of the prophet.

[Enter Herod, Herodias, and all the Court.]

HEROD

Where is Salome? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? Ah! there she is!

HERODIAS

You must not look at her! You are always looking at her!

HEROD

The moon has a strange look to-night. Has

she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman. . . . I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not?

HERODIAS

No; the moon is like the moon, that is all. Let us go within. . . . We have nothing to do here.

HEROD

I will stay here! Manasseh, lay carpets there. Light torches. Bring forth the ivory tables, and the tables of jasper. The air here is sweet. I will drink more wine with my guests. We must show all honours to the ambassadors of Cæsar.

HERODIAS

It is not because of them that you remain.

HEROD

Yes; the air is very sweet. Come, Herodias,

our guests await us. Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. It is a very ill omen. Wherefore is there blood here? . . . and this body, what does this body here? Think you I am like the King of Egypt, who gives no feast to his guests but that he shows them a corpse? Whose is it? I will not look on it.

FIRST SOLDIER

It is our captain, sire. It is the young Syrian whom you made captain of the guard but three days gone.

HEROD

I issued no order that he should be slain.

SECOND SOLDIER

He slew himself, sire.

HEROD

For what reason? I had made him captain of my guard!

SECOND SOLDIER

We do not know, sire. But with his own hand he slew himself.

HEROD

That seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves?

TIGELLINUS

There be some who slay themselves, sire. They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.

HEROD

I also. It is ridiculous to kill one's-self.

TIGELLINUS

Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.

HEROD

Ah! he has written a satire against them? Cæsar is wonderful. He can do everything. . . . It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself. I am very sorry. For he was fair to look upon. He was even very fair. He had very languorous

eyes. I remember that I saw that he looked languorously at Salome. Truly, I thought he looked too much at her.

HERODIAS

There are others who look too much at her.

HEROD

His father was a king. I drave him from his kingdom. And of his mother, who was a queen, you made a slave, Herodias. So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. I am sorry he is dead. Ho! why have you left the body here? It must be taken to some other place. I will not look at it,—away with it! [*They take away the body.*] It is cold here. There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing?

HERODIAS

No; there is no wind.

HEROD

I tell you there is a wind that blows. . . . And I hear in the air something that is like the beating of wings, like the beating of vast wings. Do you not hear it?

HERODIAS

I hear nothing.

HEROD

I hear it no longer. But I heard it. It was the blowing of the wind. It has passed away. But no, I hear it again. Do you not hear it? It is just like a beating of wings.

HERODIAS

I tell you there is nothing. You are ill. Let us go within.

HEROD

I am not ill. It is your daughter who is sick to death. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS

I have told you not to look at her.

HEROD

Pour me forth wine. [*Wine is brought.*] Salome, come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Cæsar himself sent it me. Dip into it thy little red lips, that I may drain the cup.

SALOME

I am not thirsty, Tetrarch.

HEROD

You hear how she answers me, this daughter of yours?

HERODIAS

She does right. Why are you always gazing at her?

HEROD

Bring me ripe fruits. [*Fruits are brought.*]
Salome, come and eat fruits with me. I love to see in a fruit the mark of thy little teeth. Bite but a little of this fruit, that I may eat what is left.

SALOME

I am not hungry, Tetrarch.

HEROD

[*To Herodias.*] You see how you have brought up this daughter of yours.

HERODIAS

My daughter and I come of a royal race. As

for thee, thy father was a camel driver! He was a thief and a robber to boot!

HEROD

Thou liest!

HERODIAS

Thou knowest well that it is true.

HEROD

Salome, come and sit next to me. I will give thee the throne of thy mother.

SALOME

I am not tired, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS

You see in what regard she holds you.

HEROD

Bring me——What is it that I desire? I forget. Ah! ah! I remember.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Behold the time is come! That which I foretold has come to pass. The day that I spake of is at hand.

HERODIAS

Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his

voice. This man is for ever hurling insults against me.

HEROD

He has said nothing against you. Besides, he is a very great prophet.

HERODIAS

I do not believe in prophets. Can a man tell what will come to pass? No man knows it. Also he is for ever insulting me. But I think you are afraid of him. . . . I know well that you are afraid of him.

HEROD

I am not afraid of him. I am afraid of no man.

HERODIAS

I tell you you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him why do you not deliver him to the Jews who for these six months past have been clamouring for him?

A JEW

Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

HEROD

Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

A JEW

That cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God face to face. In these days God doth not show Himself. God hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

ANOTHER JEW

Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

A THIRD JEW

God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH JEW

Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philos-

ophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumcised.

A FIFTH JEW

No man can tell how God worketh. His ways are very dark. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of anything. We can but bow our heads to His will, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

FIRST JEW

Thou speakest truly. Verily, God is terrible. He breaketh in pieces the strong and the weak as men break corn in a mortar. But as for this man, he hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

HERODIAS

Make them be silent. They weary me.

HEROD

But I have heard it said that Iokanaan is in very truth your prophet Elias.

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THE JEW

That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD

There be some who say that this man is Elias the prophet.

A NAZARENE

I am sure that he is Elias the prophet.

THE JEW

Nay, but he is not Elias the prophet.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Behold the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, and I hear upon the mountains the feet of Him who shall be the Saviour of the world.

HEROD

What does that mean? The Saviour of the world?

TIGELLINUS

It is a title that Cæsar adopts.

HEROD

But Cæsar is not coming into Judæa. Only

yesterday I received letters from Rome. They contained nothing concerning this matter. And you, Tigellinus, who were at Rome during the winter, you heard nothing concerning this matter, did you?

TIGELLINUS

Sire, I heard nothing concerning the matter. I was but explaining the title. It is one of Cæsar's titles.

HEROD

But Cæsar cannot come. He is too gouty. They say that his feet are like the feet of an elephant. Also there are reasons of state. He who leaves Rome loses Rome. He will not come. Howbeit, Cæsar is lord, he will come if such be his pleasure. Nevertheless, I think he will not come.

FIRST NAZARENE

It was not concerning Cæsar that the prophet spake these words, sire.

HEROD

How?—it was not concerning Cæsar?

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FIRST NAZARENE

No, my lord.

HEROD

Concerning whom then did he speak?

FIRST NAZARENE

Concerning Messias, who hath come.

A JEW

Messias hath not come.

FIRST NAZARENE

He hath come, and everywhere He worketh miracles!

HERODIAS

Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many. [*To the Page.*] My fan.

FIRST NAZARENE

This Man worketh true miracles. Thus, at a marriage which took place in a little town of Galilee, a town of some importance, He changed water into wine. Certain persons who were present related it to me. Also He healed two

lepers that were seated before the Gate of Capernaum simply by touching them.

SECOND NAZARENE

Nay; it was two blind men that He healed at Capernaum.

FIRST NAZARENE

Nay; they were lepers. But He hath healed blind people also, and He was seen on a mountain talking with angels.

A SADDUCEE

Angels do not exist.

A PHARISEE

Angels exist, but I do not believe that this Man has talked with them.

FIRST NAZARENE

He was seen by a great multitude of people talking with angels.

HERODIAS

How these men weary me! They are ridiculous! They are altogether ridiculous! [*To the Page.*] Well! my fan? [*The Page gives her the fan.*] You have a dreamer's look. You

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must not dream. It is only sick people who dream. [*She strikes the Page with her fan.*]

SECOND NAZARENE

There is also the miracle of the daughter of Jairus.

FIRST NAZARENE

Yea, that is sure. No man can gainsay it.

HERODIAS

Those men are mad. They have looked too long on the moon. Command them to be silent.

HEROD

What is this miracle of the daughter of Jairus?

FIRST NAZARENE

The daughter of Jairus was dead. This Man raised her from the dead.

HEROD

How! He raises people from the dead?

FIRST NAZARENE

Yea, sire; He raiseth the dead.

HEROD

I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I suffer no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead. Where is this Man at present?

SECOND NAZARENE

He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find Him.

FIRST NAZARENE

It is said that He is now in Samaria.

A JEW

It is easy to see that this is not Messiah, if He is in Samaria. It is not to the Samaritans that Messiah shall come. The Samaritans are accursed. They bring no offerings to the Temple.

SECOND NAZARENE

He left Samaria a few days since. I think that at the present moment He is in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

FIRST NAZARENE

No; He is not there. I have just come from

Jerusalem. For two months they have had no tidings of Him.

HEROD

No matter! But let them find Him, and tell Him, thus saith Herod the King, "I will not suffer Thee to raise the dead." To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind. . . . He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth I hold it a kindly deed to heal a leper. But no man shall raise the dead. . . . It would be terrible if the dead came back.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Ah! The wanton one! The harlot! Ah! the daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids! Thus saith the Lord God, Let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone her. . . .

HERODIAS

Command him to be silent!

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Let the captains of the hosts pierce her with

their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields.

HERODIAS

Nay, but it is infamous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations.

HERODIAS

You hear what he says against me? You suffer him to revile her who is your wife!

HEROD

He did not speak your name.

HERODIAS

What does that matter? You know well that it is I whom he seeks to revile. And I am your wife, am I not?

HEROD

Of a truth, dear and noble Herodias, you are my wife, and before that you were the wife of my brother.

HERODIAS

It was thou didst snatch me from his arms.

HEROD

Of a truth I was stronger than he was. . . .
But let us not talk of that matter. I do not
desire to talk of it. It is the cause of the terrible
words that the prophet has spoken. Peradven-
ture on account of it a misfortune will come.
Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias,
we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my
cup, my well-beloved. Ho! fill with wine the
great goblets of silver, and the great goblets of
glass. I will drink to Cæsar. There are Romans
here, we must drink to Cæsar.

ALL

Cæsar! Cæsar!

HEROD

Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS

What is it to you if she be pale or not?

HEROD

Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS

You must not look at her.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

In that day the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood, and the stars of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERODIAS

Ah! ah! I should like to see that day of which he speaks, when the moon shall become like blood, and when the stars shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs. This prophet talks like a drunken man, . . . but I cannot suffer the sound of his voice. I hate his voice. Command him to be silent.

HEROD

I will not. I cannot understand what it is that he saith, but it may be an omen.

HERODIAS

I do not believe in omens. He speaks like a drunken man.

HEROD

It may be he is drunk with the wine of God.

HERODIAS

What wine is that, the wine of God? From what vineyards is it gathered? In what wine-press may one find it?

HEROD

[*From this point he looks all the while at Salome.*] Tigellinus, when you were at Rome of late, did the Emperor speak with you on the subject of . . . ?

TIGELLINUS

On what subject, my lord?

HEROD

On what subject? Ah! I asked you a question, did I not? I have forgotten what I would have asked you.

HERODIAS

You are looking again at my daughter. You must not look at her. I have already said so.

HEROD

You say nothing else.

HERODIAS

I say it again.

HEROD

And that restoration of the Temple about which they have talked so much, will anything be done? They say that the veil of the Sanctuary has disappeared, do they not?

HERODIAS

It was thyself didst steal it. Thou speakest at random and without wit. I will not stay here. Let us go within.

HEROD

Dance for me, Salome.

HERODIAS

I will not have her dance.

SALOME

I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.

HEROD

Salome, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS

Peace. Let her alone.

HEROD

I command thee to dance, Salome.

SALOME

I will not dance, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS

[*Laughing.*] You see how she obeys you.

HEROD

What is it to me whether she dance or not? It is nought to me. To-night I am happy. I am exceeding happy. Never have I been so happy.

FIRST SOLDIER

The Tetrarch has a sombre look. Has he not a sombre look?

SECOND SOLDIER

Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD

Wherefore should I not be happy? Cæsar, who is lord of the world, Cæsar, who is lord of all things, loves me well. He has just sent me most precious gifts. Also he has promised me to summon to Rome the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It may be that at Rome he will

crucify him, for he is able to do all things that he has a mind to do. Verily, Cæsar is lord. Therefore I do well to be happy. I am very happy, never have I been so happy. There is nothing in the world that can mar my happiness.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

He shall be seated on his throne. He shall be clothed in scarlet and purple. In his hand he shall bear a golden cup full of his blasphemies. And the angel of the Lord shall smite him. He shall be eaten of worms.

HERODIAS

You hear what he says about you. He says that you shall be eaten of worms.

HEROD

It is not of me that he speaks. He speaks never against me. It is of the King of Cappadocia that he speaks; the King of Cappadocia who is mine enemy. It is he who shall be eaten of worms. It is not I. Never has he spoken word against me, this prophet, save that I sinned in taking to wife the wife of my brother. It may be he is right. For, of a truth, you are sterile.

HERODIAS

I am sterile, I? You say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? You speak as a fool. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not on one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I.

HEROD

Peace, woman! I say that you are sterile. You have borne me no child, and the prophet says that our marriage is not a true marriage. He says that it is a marriage of incest, a marriage that will bring evils. . . . I fear he is right; I am sure that he is right. But it is not the hour to speak of these things. I would be happy at this moment. Of a truth, I am happy. There is nothing I lack.

HERODIAS

I am glad you are of so fair a humour to-night. It is not your custom. But it is late. Let us go within. Do not forget that we hunt at sunrise. All honours must be shown to Cæsar's ambassadors, must they not?

SECOND SOLDIER

The Tetrarch has a sombre look.

FIRST SOLDIER

Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD

Salome, Salome, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad to-night. Yes, I am passing sad to-night. When I came hither I slipped in blood, which is an ill omen; also I heard in the air a beating of wings, a beating of giant wings. I cannot tell what that may mean. . . . I am sad to-night. Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salome, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Yes, dance for me, Salome, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME

[*Rising.*] Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask of you, Tetrarch?

HERODIAS

Do not dance, my daughter.

HEROD

Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME

You swear it, Tetrarch?

HEROD

I swear it, Salome.

HERODIAS

Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME

By what will you swear this thing, Tetrarch?

HEROD

By my life, by my crown, by my gods. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom, if thou wilt but dance for me. O Salome, Salome, dance for me!

SALOME

You have sworn an oath, Tetrarch.

HEROD

I have sworn an oath,

HERODIAS

My daughter, do not dance.

HEROD

Even to the half of my kingdom. Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen, Salome, if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom. Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! it is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear . . . wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! one might fancy a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! loosen my mantle. Nay, but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead. [*He tears the wreath from his head, and throws it on the table.*] Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. It is not wise to find symbols in everything that one sees. It makes life too full of terrors.

It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose-petals. It were better far to say that. . . . But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy. I am passing happy. Have I not the right to be happy? Your daughter is going to dance for me. Wilt thou not dance for me, Salome? Thou hast promised to dance for me.

HERODIAS

I will not have her dance.

SALOME

I will dance for you, Tetrarch.

HEROD

You hear what your daughter says. She is going to dance for me. Thou doest well to dance for me, Salome. And when thou hast danced for me, forget not to ask of me whatsoever thou hast a mind to ask. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. I have sworn it, have I not?

SALOME

Thou hast sworn it, Tetrarch.

HEROD

And I have never failed of my word. I am

not of those who break their oaths. I know not how to lie. I am the slave of my word, and my word is the word of a king. The King of Cappadocia had ever a lying tongue, but he is no true king. He is a coward. Also he owes me money that he will not repay. He has even insulted my ambassadors. He has spoken words that were wounding. But Cæsar will crucify him when he comes to Rome. I know that Cæsar will crucify him. And if he crucify him not, yet will he die, being eaten of worms. The prophet has prophesied it. Well! Wherefore dost thou tarry, Salome?

SALOME

I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take from off my feet my sandals. [*Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salome.*]

HEROD

Ah, thou art to dance with naked feet! 'Tis well! 'Tis well! Thy little feet will be like white doves. They will be like little white flowers that dance upon the trees. . . . No, no, she is going to dance on blood! There is

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blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.

HERODIAS

What is it to thee if she dance on blood? Thou hast waded deep enough in it. . . .

HEROD

What is it to me? Ah! look at the moon! She has become red. She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly. He prophesied that the moon would become as blood. Did he not prophesy it? All of ye heard him prophesying it. And now the moon has become as blood. Do ye not see it?

HERODIAS

Oh, yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? and the sun is becoming black like sackcloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That at least one can see. The prophet is justified of his words in that at least, for truly the kings of the earth are afraid. . . . Let us go within. You are sick. They will say at Rome that you are mad. Let us go within, I tell you.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN

Who is this who cometh from Edom, who is this who cometh from Bozra, whose raiment is dyed with purple, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Wherefore is thy raiment stained with scarlet?

HERODIAS

Let us go within. The voice of that man maddens me. I will not have my daughter dance while he is continually crying out. I will not have her dance while you look at her in this fashion. In a word, I will not have her dance.

HEROD

Do not rise, my wife, my queen, it will avail thee nothing. I will not go within till she hath danced. Dance, Salome, dance for me.

HERODIAS

Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME

I am ready, Tetrarch.

[*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils.*]

HEROD

Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she

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has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOME

[*Kneeling.*] I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger . . .

HEROD

[*Laughing.*] In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, thou that art fairer than all the daughters of Judæa? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is it that thou wouldst have, Salome?

SALOME

[*Rising.*] The head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS

Ah! that is well said, my daughter.

HEROD

No, no!

HERODIAS

That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD

No, no, Salome. It is not that thou desirest. Do not listen to thy mother's voice. She is ever giving thee evil counsel. Do not heed her.

SALOME

It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Iokanaan in a silver charger. You have sworn an oath, Herod. Forget not that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD

I know it. I have sworn an oath by my gods. I know it well. But I pray thee, Salome, ask of me something else. Ask of me the half of my kingdom, and I will give it thee. But ask not of me what thy lips have asked.

SALOME

I ask of you the head of Iokanaan.

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HEROD

No, no, I will not give it thee.

SALOME

You have sworn an oath, Herod.

HERODIAS

Yes, you have sworn an oath. Everybody heard you. You swore it before everybody.

HEROD

Peace, woman! It is not to you I speak.

HERODIAS

My daughter has done well to ask the head of Iokanaan. He has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me. One can see that she loves her mother well. Do not yield, my daughter. He has sworn an oath, he has sworn an oath.

HEROD

Peace! Speak not to me! . . . Salome, I pray thee be not stubborn. I have ever been kind toward thee. I have ever loved thee. . . . It may be that I have loved thee too much. Therefore ask not this thing of me. This is a terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me.

Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure couldst thou have in it? There is no pleasure that thou couldst have in it. No, no, it is not that thou desirest. Harken to me. I have an emerald, a great emerald and round, that the minion of Cæsar has sent unto me. When thou lookest through this emerald thou canst see that which passeth afar off. Cæsar himself carries such an emerald when he goes to the circus. But my emerald is the larger. I know well that it is the larger. It is the largest emerald in the whole world. Thou wilt take that, wilt thou not? Ask it of me and I will give it thee.

SALOME

I demand the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD

Thou art not listening. Thou art not listening. Suffer me to speak, Salome.

SALOME

The head of Iokanaan!

HEROD

No, no, thou wouldst not have that. Thou sayest that but to trouble me, because that I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. It is true, I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at thee overmuch. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. One should not look at anything. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors is it well to look, for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh! oh! bring wine! I thirst. . . . Salome, Salome, let us be as friends. Bethink thee . . . Ah! what would I say? What was't? Ah! I remember it! . . . Salome,—nay but come nearer to me; I fear thou wilt not hear my words,—Salome, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks, that walk in the garden between the myrtles and the tall cypress-trees. Their beaks are gilded with gold and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple. When they cry out the rain comes, and the moon shows herself in the heavens when they spread their tails. Two by two they walk between the cypress-trees and the

black myrtles, and each has a slave to tend it. Sometimes they fly across the trees, and anon they couch in the grass, and round the pools of the water. There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I know that Cæsar himself has no birds so fair as my birds. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks. They will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and in the midst of them thou wilt be like unto the moon in the midst of a great white cloud. . . . I will give them to thee, all. I have but a hundred, and in the whole world there is no king who has peacocks like unto my peacocks. But I will give them all to thee. Only thou must loose me from my oath, and must not ask of me that which thy lips have asked of me.

[He empties the cup of wine.]

SALOME

Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HERODIAS

Well said, my daughter! As for you, you are ridiculous with your peacocks.

HEROD

Peace! you are always crying out. You cry

out like a beast of prey. You must not cry in such fashion. Your voice wearies me. Peace, I tell you! . . . Salome, think on what thou art doing. It may be that this man comes from God. He is a holy man. The finger of God has touched him. God has put terrible words into his mouth. In the palace, as in the desert, God is ever with him. . . . It may be that He is, at least. One cannot tell, but it is possible that God is with him and for him. If he die also, peradventure some evil may befall me. Verily, he has said that evil will befall some one on the day whereon he dies. On whom should it fall if it fall not on me? Remember, I slipped in blood when I came hither. Also did I not hear a beating of wings in the air, a beating of vast wings? These are ill omens. And there were other things. I am sure that there were other things, though I saw them not. Thou wouldst not that some evil should befall me, Salome? Listen to me again.

SALOME

Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD

Ah! thou art not listening to me. Be calm. As for me, am I not calm? I am altogether calm.

Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place—jewels that thy mother even has never seen; jewels that are marvellous to look at. I have a collar of pearls, set in four rows. They are like unto moons chained with rays of silver. They are even as half a hundred moons caught in a golden net. On the ivory breast of a queen they have rested. Thou shalt be as fair as a queen when thou wearest them. I have amethysts of two kinds; one that is black like wine, and one that is red like wine that one has coloured with water. I have topazes yellow as are the eyes of tigers, and topazes that are pink as the eyes of a wood-pigeon, and green topazes that are as the eyes of cats. I have opals that burn always, with a flame that is cold as ice, opals that make sad men's minds, and are afraid of the shadows. I have onyxes like the eyeballs of a dead woman. I have moonstones that change when the moon changes, and are wan when they see the sun. I have sapphires big like eggs, and as blue as blue flowers. The sea wanders within them, and the moon comes never to trouble the blue of their waves. I have chrysolites and beryls, and chrysoprases and rubies; I have sardonyx and hyacinth stones, and stones of chalcedony, and I

will give them all unto thee, all, and other things will I add to them. The King of the Indies has but even now sent me four fans fashioned from the feathers of parrots, and the King of Numidia a garment of ostrich feathers. I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young men behold it until they have been beaten with rods. In a coffer of nacre I have three wondrous turquoises. He who wears them on his forehead can imagine things which are not, and he who carries them in his hand can turn the fruitful woman into a woman that is barren. These are great treasures. They are treasures above all price. But this is not all. In an ebony coffer I have two cups of amber that are like apples of pure gold. If an enemy pour poison into these cups they become like apples of silver. In a coffer incrusted with amber I have sandals incrusted with glass. I have mantles that have been brought from the land of the Seres, and bracelets decked about with carbuncles and with jade that come from the city of Euphrates. . . . What desirest thou more than this, Salome? Tell me the thing that thou desirest, and I will give it thee. All that thou askest I will give thee, save one thing only.

I will give thee all that is mine, save only the life of one man. I will give thee the mantle of the high priest. I will give thee the veil of the sanctuary.

THE JEWS

Oh! oh!

HERODIAS

Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD

[*Sinking back in his seat.*] Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child. [*The first soldier approaches. Herodias draws from the hand of the Tetrarch the ring of death, and gives it to the Soldier, who straightway bears it to the Executioner. The Executioner looks scared.*] Who has taken my ring? There was a ring on my right hand. Who has drunk my wine? There was wine in my cup. It was full of wine. Some one has drunk it! Oh! surely some evil will befall some one. [*The Executioner goes down into the cistern.*] Ah! wherefore did I give my oath? Hereafter let no king swear an oath. If he keep it not, it is terrible, and if he keep it, it is terrible also.

HERODIAS

My daughter has done well.

HEROD

I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

SALOME

[*She leans over the cistern and listens.*] There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer. . . . Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you. . . . No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah! something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. It was the sword of the executioner. He is afraid, this slave. He has dropped his sword. He dares not kill him. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. [*She sees the Page of Herodias and addresses him.*] Come hither. Thou wert the friend of him who is dead, wert thou not? Well, I tell thee, there are not dead men enough. Go to the soldiers and bid them go down and bring me the thing I ask, the thing the Tetrarch has promised me, the thing that is mine. [*The Page recoils. She turns to the soldiers.*] Hither, ye soldiers. Get

ye down into this cistern and bring me the head of this man. Tetrarch, Tetrarch, command your soldiers that they bring me the head of Iokanaan.

[A huge black arm, the arm of the Executioner, comes forth from the cistern, bearing on a silver shield the head of Iokanaan. Salome seizes it. Herod hides his face with his cloak. Herodias smiles and fans herself. The Nazarenes fall on their knees and begin to pray.]

* Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now. . . . But wherefore dost thou not look at me, Iokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Iokanaan! Wherefore dost thou not look at me? Art thou afraid of me, Iokanaan, that thou wilt not look at me? . . . And thy tongue, that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Iokanaan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not? How

is it that the red viper stirs no longer? . . .
Thou wouldst have none of me, Iokanaan. Thou rejectedst me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. I can do with it what I will. I can throw it to the dogs and to the birds of the air. That which the dogs leave, the birds of the air shall devour. . . . Ah, Iokanaan, Iokanaan, thou wert the man that I loved alone among men! All other men were hateful to me. But thou wert beautiful! Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver. It was a garden full of doves and lilies of silver. It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory. There was nothing in the world so white as thy body. There was nothing in the world so black as thy hair. In the whole world there was nothing so red as thy mouth. Thy voice was a censer that scattered strange perfumes, and when I looked on thee I heard a strange music. Ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me, Iokanaan? With the cloak of thine hands, and with the cloak of thy blasphemies

thou didst hide thy face. Thou didst put upon thine eyes the covering of him who would see his God. Well, thou hast seen thy God, Iokanaan, but me, me, thou didst never see. If thou hadst seen me thou hadst loved me. I saw thee, and I loved thee. Oh, how I loved thee! I love thee yet, Iokanaan. I love only thee. . . . I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire. What shall I do now, Iokanaan? Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion. I was a princess, and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire. . . . Ah! ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me? If thou hadst looked at me thou hadst loved me. Well I know that thou wouldst have loved me, and the mystery of Love is greater than the mystery of Death.

HEROD

She is monstrous, thy daughter; I tell thee she is monstrous. In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is a crime against some unknown God.

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HERODIAS

I am well pleased with my daughter. She **has** done well. And I would stay here now.

HEROD

[*Rising.*] Ah! There speaks my brother's wife! Come! I will not stay in this place. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Manasseh, Issachar, Ozias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid.

[*The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.*]

THE VOICE OF SALOME

Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? . . . Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love.

. . . They say that love hath a bitter taste.
. . . But what matter? what matter? I have
kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy
mouth.

[A ray of moonlight falls on Salome and illumines her.]

HEROD

[Turning round and seeing Salome.] Kill
that woman!

*[The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath
their shields Salome, daughter of Herodias,
Princess of Judæa.]*

CURTAIN.

La Sainte Courtisane
A Fragment

LA SAINTE COURTISANE

OR, THE WOMAN COVERED WITH JEWELS

The scene represents the corner of a valley in the Thebaid. On the right hand of the stage is a cavern. In front of the cavern stands a great crucifix.

On the left [sand dunes].

The sky is blue like the inside of a cup of lapis lazuli. The hills are of red sand. Here and there on the hills there are clumps of thorns.

FIRST MAN

Who is she? She makes me afraid. She has a purple cloak and her hair is like threads of gold. I think she must be the daughter of the Emperor. I have heard the boatmen say that the Emperor has a daughter who wears a cloak of purple.

SECOND MAN

She has birds' wings upon her sandals, and her tunic is of the colour of green corn. It is like

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corn in spring when she stands still. It is like young corn troubled by the shadows of hawks when she moves. The pearls on her tunic are like many moons.

FIRST MAN

They are like the moons one sees in the water when the wind blows from the hills.

SECOND MAN

I think she is one of the gods. I think she comes from Nubia.

FIRST MAN

I am sure she is the daughter of the Emperor. Her nails are stained with henna. They are like the petals of a rose. She has come here to weep for Adonis.

SECOND MAN

She is one of the gods. I do not know why she has left her temple. The gods should not leave their temples. If she speaks to us let us not answer, and she will pass by.

FIRST MAN

She will not speak to us. She is the daughter of the Emperor.

MYRRHINA

Dwells he not here, the beautiful young hermit, he who will not look on the face of woman?

FIRST MAN

Of a truth it is here the hermit dwells.

MYRRHINA

Why will he not look on the face of woman?

SECOND MAN

We do not know.

MYRRHINA

Why do ye yourselves not look at me?

FIRST MAN

You are covered with bright stones, and you dazzle our eyes.

SECOND MAN

He who looks at the sun becomes blind. You

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are too bright to look at. It is not wise to look at things that are very bright. Many of the priests in the temples are blind, and have slaves to lead them.

MYRRHINA

Where does he dwell, the beautiful young hermit who will not look on the face of woman? Has he a house of reeds or a house of burnt clay or does he lie on the hillside? Or does he make his bed in the rushes?

FIRST MAN

He dwells in that cavern yonder.

MYRRHINA

What a curious place to dwell in!

FIRST MAN

Of old a centaur lived there. When the hermit came the centaur gave a shrill cry, wept and lamented, and galloped away.

SECOND MAN

No. It was a white unicorn who lived in the cave. When it saw the hermit coming the uni-

corn knelt down and worshipped him. Many people saw it worshipping him.

FIRST MAN

I have talked with people who saw it.

.

SECOND MAN

Some say he was a hewer of wood and worked for hire. But that may not be true.

.

MYRRHINA

What gods then do ye worship? Or do ye worship any gods? There are those who have no gods to worship. The philosophers who wear long beards and brown cloaks have no gods to worship. They wrangle with each other in the porticoes. The [] laugh at them.

FIRST MAN

We worship seven gods. We may not tell their names. It is a very dangerous thing to tell the names of the gods. No one should ever tell the name of his god. Even the priests who praise the gods all day long, and eat of their food with them, do not call them by their right names.

MYRRHINA

Where are these gods ye worship?

FIRST MAN

We hide them in the folds of our tunics. We do not show them to any one. If we showed them to any one they might leave us.

MYRRHINA

Where did ye meet with them?

FIRST MAN

They were given to us by an embalmer of the dead who had found them in a tomb. We served him for seven years.

MYRRHINA

The dead are terrible. I am afraid of Death.

FIRST MAN

Death is not a god. He is only the servant of the gods.

MYRRHINA

He is the only god I am afraid of. Ye have seen many of the gods?

FIRST MAN

We have seen many of them. One sees them chiefly at night time. They pass one by very swiftly. Once we saw some of the gods at day-break. They were walking across a plain.

MYRRHINA

Once as I was passing through the market place I heard a sophist from Cilicia say that there is only one God. He said it before many people.

FIRST MAN

That cannot be true. We have ourselves seen many, though we are but common men and of no account. When I saw them I hid myself in a bush. They did me no harm.

.

MYRRHINA

Tell me more about the beautiful young hermit. Talk to me about the beautiful young hermit who will not look on the face of woman. What is the story of his days? What mode of life has he?

FIRST MAN

We do not understand you.

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MYRRHINA

What does he do, the beautiful young hermit? Does he sow or reap? Does he plant a garden or catch fish in a net? Does he weave linen on a loom? Does he set his hand to the wooden plough and walk behind the oxen?

SECOND MAN

He being a very holy man does nothing. We are common men and of no account. We toil all day long in the sun. Sometimes the ground is very hard.

MYRRHINA

Do the birds of the air feed him? Do the jackals share their booty with him?

FIRST MAN

Every evening we bring him food. We do not think that the birds of the air feed him.

MYRRHINA

Why do ye feed him? What profit have ye in so doing?

SECOND MAN

He is a very holy man. One of the gods whom

he has offended has made him mad. We think he has offended the moon.

MYRRHINA

Go and tell him that one who has come from Alexandria desires to speak with him.

FIRST MAN

We dare not tell him. This hour he is praying to his God. We pray thee to pardon us for not doing thy bidding.

MYRRHINA

Are ye afraid of him?

FIRST MAN

We are afraid of him.

MYRRHINA

Why are ye afraid of him?

FIRST MAN

We do not know.

MYRRHINA

What is his name?

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FIRST MAN

The voice that speaks to him at night time in the cavern calls to him by the name of Honorius. It was also by the name of Honorius that the three lepers who passed by once called to him. We think that his name is Honorius.

MYRRHINA

Why did the three lepers call to him?

FIRST MAN

That he might heal them.

MYRRHINA

Did he heal them?

SECOND MAN

No. They had committed some sin: it was for that reason they were lepers. Their hands and faces were like salt. One of them wore a mask of linen. He was a king's son.

MYRRHINA

What is the voice that speaks to him at night time in his cave?

FIRST MAN

We do not know whose voice it is. We think it is the voice of his God. For we have seen no man enter his cavern nor any come forth from it.

.

MYRRHINA

Honorius.

HONORIUS (*from within*)

Who calls Honorius?

MYRRHINA

Come forth, Honorius.

.

My chamber is ceiled with cedar and odorous with myrrh. The pillars of my bed are of cedar and the hangings are of purple. My bed is strewn with purple and the steps are of silver. The hangings are sewn with silver pomegranates and the steps that are of silver are strewn with saffron and with myrrh. My lovers hang garlands round the pillars of my house. At night time they come with the flute players and the players of the harp. They woo me with apples and on the pavement of my courtyard they write my name in wine.

From the uttermost parts of the world my lov-

ers come to me. The kings of the earth come to me and bring me presents.

When the Emperor of Byzantium heard of me he left his porphyry chamber and set sail in his galleys. His slaves bare no torches that none might know of his coming. When the King of Cyprus heard of me he sent me ambassadors. The two Kings of Libya who are brothers brought me gifts of amber.

I took the minion of Cæsar from Cæsar and made him my playfellow. He came to me at night in a litter. He was pale as a narcissus, and his body was like honey.

The son of the Præfect slew himself in my honour, and the Tetrarch of Cilicia scourged himself for my pleasure before my slaves.

The King of Hierapolis who is a priest and a robber set carpets for me to walk on.

Sometimes I sit in the circus and the gladiators fight beneath me. Once a Thracian who was my lover was caught in the net. I gave the signal for him to die and the whole theatre applauded. Sometimes I pass through the gymnasium and watch the young men wrestling or in the race. Their bodies are bright with oil and their brows are wreathed with willow sprays and with myrtle.

They stamp their feet on the sand when they wrestle and when they run the sand follows them like a little cloud. He at whom I smile leaves his companions and follows me to my home. At other times I go down to the harbour and watch the merchants unloading their vessels. Those that come from Tyre have cloaks of silk and earrings of emerald. Those that come from Massilia have cloaks of fine wool and earrings of brass. When they see me coming they stand on the prows of their ships and call to me, but I do not answer them. I go to the little taverns where the sailors lie all day long drinking black wine and playing with dice and I sit down with them.

I made the Prince my slave, and his slave who was a Tyrian I made my lord for the space of a moon.

I put a figured ring on his finger and brought him to my house. I have wonderful things in my house.

The dust of the desert lies on your hair and your feet are scratched with thorns and your body is scorched by the sun. Come with me, Honorius, and I will clothe you in a tunic of silk. I will smear your body with myrrh and pour spikenard on your hair. I will clothe you in hyacinth and put honey in your mouth. Love——

200 THE WRITINGS OF OSCAR WILDE.

HONORIUS

There is no love but the love of God.

MYRRHINA

Who is He whose love is greater than that of mortal men?

HONORIUS

It is He whom thou seest on the cross, Myrrhina. He is the Son of God and was born of a virgin. Three wise men who were kings brought Him offerings, and the shepherds who were lying on the hills were wakened by a great light.

The Sibyls knew of His coming. The groves and the oracles spake of Him. David and the prophets announced Him. There is no love like the love of God nor any love that can be compared to it.

The body is vile, Myrrhina. God will raise thee up with a new body which will not know corruption, and thou shalt dwell in the Courts of the Lord and see Him whose hair is like fine wool and whose feet are of brass.

MYRRHINA

The beauty . . .

HONORIUS

The beauty of the soul increases until it can see God. Therefore, Myrrhina, repent of thy sins. The robber who was crucified beside Him He brought into Paradise. *[Exit.*

MYRRHINA

How strangely he spake to me. And with what scorn did he regard me. I wonder why he spake to me so strangely.

HONORIUS

Myrrhina, the scales have fallen from my eyes and I see now clearly what I did not see before. Take me to Alexandria and let me taste of the seven sins.

MYRRHINA

Do not mock me, Honorius, nor speak to me with such bitter words. For I have repented of my sins and I am seeking a cavern in this desert where I too may dwell so that my soul may become worthy to see God.

HONORIUS

The sun is setting, Myrrhina. Come with me to Alexandria.

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MYRRHINA

I will not go to Alexandria.

HONORIUS

Farewell, Myrrhina.

MYRRHINA

Honorius, farewell. No, no, do not go.

.
I have cursed my beauty for what it has done,
and cursed the wonder of my body for the evil
that it has brought upon you.

Lord, this man brought me to Thy feet. He
told me of Thy coming upon earth, and of the
wonder of Thy birth, and the great wonder of Thy
death also. By him, O Lord, Thou wast revealed
to me.

HONORIUS

You talk as a child, Myrrhina, and without
knowledge. Loosen your hands. Why didst thou
come to this valley in thy beauty?

MYRRHINA

The God whom thou worshippest led me here
that I might repent of my iniquities and know
Him as the Lord.

HONORIUS

Why didst thou tempt me with words?

MYRRHINA

That thou shouldst see Sin in its painted mask
and look on Death in its robe of Shame.

For Love of the King
A Burmese Masque
In Three Acts and Nine Scenes

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

KING MENG BENG, Lord of a thousand white elephants, countless umbrellas and other attributes of greatness.

U. RAI GYAN THOO, Prime Minister.

SHAH MAH PHRU, A girl, half Italian, half Burmese, of dazzling beauty.

DHAMMATHAT, Legal adviser to the court.

HIP LOONG, A wizard of great repute.

MOUNG PHO MHIN, Minister of Finance.

Two Envoys from the King of Ceylon.

Nobles, Courtiers, Soothsayers, Poonygees, Dancing Girls, Betel-Nut Carriers, Umbrella-Bearers, Followers, Servants, Slaves, Among Whom Are Several Chinese, But No Indians.

FOR LOVE OF THE KING.

ACT I

SCENE I

The palace of the *King of Burmah*. The scene is laid in the Hall of a Hundred Doors. In the distance can be seen the moat, the waiting elephants, and the peacocks promenading proudly in the blinding sunshine of a late afternoon. The scene discovers *King Meng Beng* seated on a raised cushion sewn with rubies, under a canopy supported by four attendants, motionless as bronze figures.

By his side is a betel-nut box, glittering with gems. On each side of him, but much lower down, are the *Two Ambassadors of the King of Ceylon*, bearers of the King of Ceylon's consent to the marriage of his only daughter to *Meng Beng* in two years' time, men of grave majestic mien, clad in flowing robes almost monastic in their white simplicity. They smoke gravely at the invitation of *Meng Beng*.

Round about are grouped the courtiers, the poonygees, and the kneeling servants, while in the background wait the dancing girls. Banners propelled with measured rhythm create an agreeable breeze. On a great table of gold stand goblets of gold and heaped-up fruits. Everywhere will be observed the emblems of the royal peacock and the sacred white elephant. Burmese musical instruments sound an abrupt, but charming, discord. Poinsettias punctuate points of deepest colour from out vases fashioned like the lotus. Orchids are everywhere. The indescribable scent of Burmah steals across the footlights. The glow, the colour, the sun-swept vista sweep across the senses. *The King* claps his hands. The *Dancing Girls*, at a signal, advance. They are clad in dresses made of fish-scales, which are fastened with diamonds and pale emeralds to imitate the upthrown spray on the crest of a wave.

The dance concluded, the *Cingalese Ambassadors* rise and prepare to take ceremonious leave of *The King*, who hands to them, through his *Vizir*, his message to his Majesty of Ceylon, inscribed on palm-leaves and inclosed in a bejeweled casket.

Many flowery speeches pass as they exit L, walking backward.

The King expresses a desire for rest before starting by the Moon of Taboung¹ for the Pagoda of Golden Flowers.

Exit *Meng Beng* (C), an alcove of satin hangings that commands a view of the great hill.

The crowd breaks up into groups. *U. Rai Gyan Thoo* and *Moung Pho Mhin* converse on the tendency of the king to interference in state affairs, his extreme youth, and his delicacy of temperament; the pity that the marriage is to be so long delayed; the necessity of finding him some distraction in the meantime.

Suddenly the tom-toms sound loudly. There is much movement. The moon rises over the sea. Torches flare as the attendants move to and fro in the garden beyond.

The white elephant of the king, with its trappings of gold, is led to the entrance, where at a word it sinks obediently to the ground.

The King appears. He has changed his gay apple-green dress for one of more somber hue. He enters the howdah, the elephant rises, the procession starts. It consists of not fewer than two

¹ One of the greatest feasts of the Buddhist year.

hundred people, keeping in view of the audience until lost by a bend in the avenue.

Curtain

SCENE II

The Pagoda of Golden Flowers. Midnight. Surrounded by pipul-trees, the great Htec, with its crown of myriad jewels, rises toward the violet, star-studded sky, its golden bells tinkling in a soft night wind.

When the curtain rises, the circular platform is deserted. Statues of Buddha seated and recumbent fill the numberless niches in the wall, and before each burn long candles; heaped up pink roses and japonica on brass trays are lit from above by swinging, coloured lamps. At intervals are stalls laden with fruit and cheroots. All is mysterious, solemn, beautiful.

A deep Burmese gong tolls. People emerge from the four staircases that lead up to the platform, men, women, and children, all in gala attire. The young people, conversing, gesticulating, smiling. The older people, more subdued, carry beads and votive offering to Buddha. Charming Burmese girls with huge cigars meet and greet hand-

some Burmese men smoking cheroots and wearing flowers in their ears. Children play silently with coloured balls. In the corners, under canopies, are seated fortune-tellers, busy casting horoscopes. It is a veritable riot of color, with never a discordant note.

Through the crowd *The King* passes alone and unrecognized, and disappears through double doors of heavily carved teak-wood. He has hardly passed, when a very lovely girl enters in apparent distress. She whispers that she desires an audience of the king who has come among them. The few who hear her shrug their shoulders, smile, and pass on. They are incredulous. She goes from group to group, but the people turn from her with disdain. Then the great doors open, and *The King* is seen. The girl throws herself, Oriental fashion in his path. Her beauty and her pathos arrest his attention, and he waves aside those who would interfere. She explains that since her father's death she has been continuously persecuted by the village people on the double count of her Italian blood and her poverty.

She implores *The King's* protection. She is willing to be his slave. He listens with deep attention. The girl invites him to come to her

hut in the forest and verify what she says. With a gesture he signifies that he will follow where she leads. She rises. The crowd gathers round; all are hushed to silence. *The King*, as one entranced, waves aside all who would in any way interfere. The girl precedes him, going from the pagoda toward the night. When she reaches the great staircase, she beckons Oriental fashion, with downward hand. The scene should, in grouping and colour, make for rare beauty.

Curtain

SCENE III

A humble dhunni-thatched hut, set amidst the whispering grandeur of the jungle, with its weighty trees, its trackless paths, its indescribable silence. The curtain discovers *Mah Phru* and *The King*, who expresses his amazement at the loneliness and poverty of her lot. She explains that poverty is not what frightens her, but the enmity of those who live yonder, and who make it almost impossible for her to sell her cucumbers or her pineapples. *The King's* gaze never leaves the face or figure of the girl. He declares that he will protect her, that he will build her a home

here in the shadow of the loneliness around them. He has two years of unfettered freedom; for those years he can command his life. He loves her, he desires her, they will find a paradise together. The girl trembles with joy, with fear, with surprise. "And after two years?" she asks. "Death, if necessary," he answers.

Curtain

ACT II

SCENE I

The jungle once more. Time: noonday. In place of the hut is a building, half Burmese, half Italian villa, of white, thick wood, with curled roofs rising on roofs gilded and adorned with spiral carvings and a myriad golden and jewel-incrusted bells. On the broad verandas are thrown Eastern carpets, rugs, embroideries.

The world is sun-soaked. The surrounding trees stand sentinel-like in the burning light. Burmese servants squat motionless, smoking on the broad white steps that lead from the house to the garden. The crows croak drowsily at intervals. Parrots scream intermittently. The sound of a guitar playing a Venetian love-song can be heard coming from the interior. Otherwise life apparently sleeps. Two elderly retainers break the silence.

"When will the Thakin tire of this?" asks the other in kindly contempt.

"To-day the break is written. I read it at dawn."

"Whence will it come?"

"I know not, but when it comes, one heart will break."

"He will leave her?"

"He will leave her. He will have no choice. Who can war with Fate?"

The sun shifts a little; a light breeze kisses the motionless palm-leaves; they quiver gracefully. Attendants appear R and L, bearing a great *shamiana* (tent), silver poles, carved chairs, foot-supports, fruit, flowers, embroidered fans. Three musicians in semi-Venetian-Burmese costumes follow with their instruments. Enter C *Meng Beng* and *Mah Phru*, followed by two Burmese women carrying two tiny children in Burmese fashion on their hips.

The servants retire to a distance. *Meng Beng* and *Mah Phru* seat themselves on carven chairs in the tent; the children are placed at their feet, and given coloured glass balls to play with. *Meng Beng* and *Mah Phru* gaze at them with deep affection and then at each other.

The musicians play light zephyr-like airs. *Meng Beng* and *Mah Phru* talk together. *Meng Beng* smokes a cigar, *Mah Phru* has one of the big yellow cheroots affected by Burmese women to-

day. "It wants but a few hours to the two years," he tells her sadly.

"And you are happy?"

"As a god."

She smiles radiantly. She suspects nothing. She is more beautiful than before. Her dress is of the richest Mandalay silks. She wears big rubies in her ears.

Presently *Meng Beng* arranges a set of ivory chessmen on a low table between them. The sun sinks slowly. The sound of approaching wheels is heard.

Enter *C U. Rai Gyan Thoo* preceded by two servants. *Meng Beng* looks up in surprise, in alarm. He goes forward. *U. Rai Gyan Thoo* presents a letter written on palm-leaves. *Meng Beng* does not open it.

The curtains of the opening of the tent are, Oriental fashion, immediately dropped.

Meng Beng and the *Grand Vizir* converse alone. The minister explains that the Princess of Ceylon's ship, with its great convoy, has already been sighted. The court and city wait in eager expectancy. The King has worshipped long enough at the Pagoda of Golden Flowers; his subjects and his bride call to him.

Meng Beng is terribly distressed.

"You can return one day," the *Vizir* tells him. "The pagoda will remain. I also, once, in years long dead, Lord of the Sea and Moon, worshipped at a pagoda."

Meng Beng seeks *Mah Phru* to explain that he goes on urgent affairs, that he will come back to her and his sons, perhaps before the waning of the new moon. Their parting is sad with the pen-sive sadness of look and gesture peculiar to Eastern peoples.

Meng Beng goes C with *U. Rai Gyan Thoo*. *Mah Phru* mounts to the veranda to watch them go from behind the curtains. Then, slowly sinking across the heaped-up cushions, she faints.

The sun has set. The music ceases. The melancholy cry of the peacocks fills the silence.

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE I

Seven years have elapsed. The same scene. Curtain discovers *Mah Phru* seated on a high veranda. A clearance has been made in the surrounding trees to give a full view of the road beyond. She is watching, always watching. With her are her two beautiful little boys.

"To-day, perhaps," she murmurs. "Perhaps tomorrow, but without fail one day."

"Look!" she cries. "At last my lord returns!"

Coming up the jungle road in view of the audience are a bevy of horsemen.

Mah Phru, wondering, descends to greet them. Enter *U. Rai Gyan Thoo*. He is dressed all in white, which is Burmese mourning. *Mah Phru* sinks back; she fears the worst. The old man reassures her. He tells her that *Meng Beng* has sent for his sons, that the Queen is dead, and there is no heir.

"Queen? What queen?" demands *Mah Phru*.

"The Queen of Burmah."

Weeping, but not daring to disobey, *Mah Phru* summons the children to her; then sinking to her

knees, entreats them in moving and pathetic words to be permitted to go with them in the lowest, most menial capacity. *U. Rai Gyan Thoo* refuses. There is no place for her in the greatness of the world yonder. "Even kings forget," he says. It is the command of the supreme Lord of the Earth and of the Sky that she remain where she is.

Then he orders his followers to make the necessary arrangements for the safe journey of their future king and his brother.

The children stand passive in their gay dress, but are bewildered and afraid.

Mah Phru has risen to her feet. She appears as if turned to bronze, a model of restraint and dignity, blent with colour and beauty and grace.

The curtain descends slowly

SCENE II

The same night. The home of the Chinese wizard *Hip Loong* by the river, a place filled with Chinese things. Dragons of gold with eyes of jade gleam from out dim corners, Buddhas of gigantic size fashioned of priceless metals, with heads that move, swinging banners, with fringe of many colored stones, lanterns with glass sides on which are painted grotesque figures. The air

is full of the scent of joss-sticks. The wizard reclines on a divan inhaling opium, slowly, clothed with the subdued gorgeousness of China; blue and tomato-red dominate. He has the appearance of a wrinkled walnut. His forehead is a latticework of wrinkles. His pigtail, braided with red, is twisted round his head. His hands are as claws. The effect is weird, unearthly.

Enter *Mah Phru*.

The wizard silently motions her to some piled-up cushions at a little distance. He listens to what she has to tell him. He appears unmoved at a recital apparently so tragic. Only the eyes of the dragons move, and the heads of the Buddhas go slowly, like pendulums. When she has finished speaking, *Hip Loong* answers:

"This is how love always ends. I have lived for a thousand years, and on this planet it is always the same."

Mah Phru is not listening.

"How can I go to my children?" she demands once again.

"I can turn you into a bird," the wizard says. "You can travel to the palace and watch ever in that terrace in the rose gardens above the sea."

"What bird?" she asks, trembling.

"You shall take the form of a white paddy-bird, because, although a woman, and foolish as women ever are, you are pure, ivory daughter of man and of love."

To this *Mah Phru* dissents.

"Transform me into a peacock; they are more beautiful."

The wizard, leaning on his elbow, smiles, and the smile is a wondrous revelation of a mocking comprehension.

Curtain

SCENE III

The Gardens of the Palace of the King. Time: late afternoon. Colonnades of roses stretch away on every side. Fountains play, throwing a shower on water-lilies of monstrous size. Peacocks walk with stately tread across the green turf. Only one, larger and more beautiful than the rest, is perched alone, with drooping head and folded tail, on the broad-pillared terrace that overhangs the sea. The scene is aglow with light and colour, yet holds a shadowed silence.

Enter some courtiers, who converse in perturbed fashion as they go toward the palace.

Enter *Moung Pho Mhin* and *U. Rai Gyan Thoo*

accompanied by the court physicians and astrologers.

The king cannot live beyond the night, the physicians say. The sudden mysterious illness that has attacked him defies their skill.

The astrologers declare that the stars in their courses fight against his recovery; unless a miracle should happen, the new day will see him dead.

The ministers regard each other in consternation, then walk the terrace with bent heads.

The peacock on the wall spreads its tail and utters a melancholy cry of poignant pain. The listeners start in superstitious horror. The peacock folds its tail and resumes its meditations.

"That bird is not as other birds," one astrologer declares. "I have watched it for years past. It is ever alone; the others all avoid it. I think it has a soul."

"You mistake," replies his colleague; "it is but an evil [?]. Observe its eyes; they are not those of a bird; they are those of a spirit in prison."

They pass on in the wake of the ministers.

The peacock closes its eyes.

Enter the two young *Princes* accompanied by two great Pegu hounds. They converse in sub-

dued tones, strolling slowly. They are followed by two pages of honour carrying grain, which the young men proceed to distribute among the birds, which rapidly come to them. The peacock on the wall never stirs; it watches the young men always. Then the elder one comes with a handful of grain and proffers it, but the peacock does not eat.

"I shall never understand you, 'Queen of the Kingdom of Birds,'" he says, and strokes her feathers. At his touch the plumage scintillates with brighter, more exquisite sheen.

He converses with the bird in soft tones and mythical language. He tells her that the fear of all is that the king is mortally stricken, for he lies yonder in most strange and evil agony; that the hearts of himself and his brother are numb with the sorrow that knows no language. The bird listens eagerly. And if the king should go, he, the speaker, will reign in his stead. The prospect fills him with fear. He desires, if the king must die, to return to dwell in the forest with the mother, who he knows awaits him there.

The peacock spreads its wings as if for flight, then crouches down once more, and over it watches the young prince.

The sun envelops them both in a sudden shaft

of rose and purple and gold. A servant descends, and he stops and crosses the grass. He *shikoes* profoundly to the two young men, lifting up his hands in the deepest reverence of Burmah.

"The Lord of Earth and the Sky desires his sons; he nears the great unknown."

Curtain

SCENE IV

The retreat of *Hip Loong* the wizard. Time: the same night. The curtain discovers *Mah Phru*, who has returned to human form, and the wizard together.

He tells her that he has restored her to her former state only because she has implored him to do so; that her life is measured by hours as a consequence of such insensate folly in breaking the vows of five years back.

"But the king will live," she murmurs.

"The king will live. He will find happiness with some one fairer than you. That is well. Your life for his."

"The price is nothing. Have I not gazed on my heart's beloved, heard his voice, trembled with joy at his footstep? Have I not waited and

watched? Have I not looked on my sons and seen their royal bearing and known their touch?"

"You are, then, content?"

"You are a wizard; you can read."

"It is not I that am a wizard; it is Love."

Curtain

SCENE V

The bedchamber of the king, vast and shadowy. On heaped-up cushions and covers of yellow and blue, under a pearl-sewn, creamy, velvet baldachin, embroidered with peacocks, lies *Meng Beng*, mortally stricken; his face bears the ashen pallor that only dark skins show. The ministers, the servants, the courtiers, the countless motley gathering of an Eastern court, are scattered in anxious groups, watching, waiting, murmuring. Only the space near the couch is clear. Without, the dawn breaks over the sea, and, stealing through the openings, makes the great chamber flush till it looks like porphyry.

The tolling of a deep gong and the voices of a myriad birds invade the throbbing silence of the palace.

"He passes," murmur the physicians. Every one's gaze turns to the dying man.

"Yet his star is in the ascendant," say the astrologers.

The rising sun touches him with its light like a caress. He opens his eyes. His sons advance. They raise him on his cushions and give a restorative. Suddenly he rallies slightly.

The doors at the far end are rudely opened. A woman, young and lovely, advances, thrusting aside the many hands stretched out to bar her path.

She reaches *the King*.

"I bring you Life, star of my Soul," she cried. "I bring you life," and, so saying, falls dead at his feet.

The courtiers rush forward.

The King rises. He stands erect.

The sun lies like a golden benediction over all. Jewels glisten, corruscate. The whole world of birds sing.

The Curtain Falls

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